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GEORG VON GIŻYCKI, AND EDWIN D. MEAD,

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IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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ETHICAL RELIGION

BY

WILLIAM MACKINTIRE SALTER

WITH INTRODUCTION BY STANTON COIT, PH.D.

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INTRODUCTION

ETHICAL Societies constitute the only organised religious movement which has come into existence and developed under the Darwinian method of viewing human events. Even the Positivist Society is pre-Darwinian in origin. And the writings, not only of Comte but of his disciples, show, by at least a faint tint, that they have been dipped in the vat of pre-Darwinianism.

With this statement I premise my Introduction to Mr. Salter's essays in Ethical Religion. I do so for two reasons. In the first place, they were written—so to speak—from the Ethical Movement; they came out of the heart of it; they were written for it, and have already had a marked influence upon it. In the second place, their author was, so far as I know, the first to keep the emotional side of the highest moral idealism perfectly intact, and yet adjust himself to the naturalistic view of the origin of the moral sentiments, and of the life that is true to them. I do not think that the like achievement has been attained by any other modern essayist, not even by either of those two more glowing rhetoricians of a naturalistic ethic—Professor Clifford and Monsieur Guyau. And of the founder of the Ethical Society Movement, Professor Felix Adler, although it must be said that no one else's writings excel his in depth, strength, and purity of moral conviction, yet in them a distinctly scientific cultivation of mind is not so much in evidence as the philosophical and critical method of the German dialectical schools. Kant and his intellectual successors, however, are not representative of the habits of thought in the Ethical Societies (at least of Great Britain)—nor, as for that, in the whole of the modern world—to the same degree as are Darwin and all who, with him, seek to account for every new form of life and of mind by the action of environment upon organism.

Now, in Mr. Salter's essays this thought, although it seldom has occasion to come to overt expression, acts as an all-pervading principle, checking and guiding his speculative fancy, and bringing it into close and seeing relation with the modern universe. It subjects his imagination to its own rigorous canons, and directs his emotions to goals

within cosmic possibilities; but it has not cooled his ethical fervour, nor clipped his soul's wings.

The atmosphere of these essays is Science; but Religion is the life of them. Here, indeed, is a science-breathing religion. This seems to me the salient feature, the rare charm, of these essays. One cannot read them without the happy surprise of continually finding that in them the spiritual enthusiasm of the old-time saints and martyrs survives the discipline of the naturalistic and evolutionary way of thinking; and not only survives, but gains from it a new beauty and harmony, as if at last all discord between intellect and the highest sentiment had been resolved. We have here the simplicity and devotion of Thomas à Kempis, and yet a complete dropping of the distinctively Christian symbolism, and an entire absence of all animistic conceptions of the universe. In their place is a deep sense of the universality of the law of cause and effect, and a superb consciousness that man's highest achievements, and even his unattainable dreams of the Best, are a part of Nature—are, indeed, Nature's natural crown. There is here the same sense of the same glory which the ancient prophets felt and beheld. But the glory is no longer above, or outside of, or opposed to Nature. It is Nature become conscious in man, and man become conscious of the Moral Ideal as the vital principle of his constitution—a principle which has not yet been fully embodied in his life, but which he knows he can fulfil, because he finds his deepest cravings satisfied in proportion to his obedience.

Mr. Salter was the founder, and is still the lecturer, of the Chicago Society for Ethical Culture. He was the first to join Professor Adler with the intention of devoting his life to the Ethical Movement. He had been educated to become a Unitarian minister. He studied at the Yale Divinity School, and was sent to Germany on a student's scholarship. It was after his return to America that he identified himself with the Ethical Movement. In about 1885 he established the Chicago Ethical Society.

Mr. Salter has published many separate essays, which he at first delivered as Ethical lectures. He is also the author of a very helpful book for beginners in the study of metaphysics, entitled *First Steps in Philosophy*, a volume unique in that its easy style and simplicity of phrase cause the reader to feel quite at home, despite the profundity and massiveness of the thought. With the same literary grace is written Mr. Salter's little book entitled *Anarchy or Government?*. The author is unquestionably on the side of government. But he feels to the full

the enormity of the iniquities of the present-day Powers. He makes us understand how these have driven many men of sensitive nature blind to the possibility of overcoming the evils of government without abolishing government itself.

Mr. Salter's essay on *Anarchy or Government?* is, however, more than a speculative argument: it is an autobiographical document. When the great anarchist outrage was perpetrated in the 'eighties, in Chicago, and the anarchists had been condemned to death, they were allowed the privilege of conversing with whatever minister of religion they might wish to meet. Although they were fully aware that Mr. Salter had no sympathy with their anarchic principles or their complicity in the dynamite plot, he was the only teacher of religion whom they would consent to see. He visited them often in their prison cells. And it was in part through his intercession that the judgment against some of the anarchists was commuted from death to imprisonment for life. Whoever reads the following pages will believe that these embittered and maddened enemies of the present social order chose Mr. Salter as their spiritual consoler, not so much because they agreed with his philosophic views of the universe as because they had learned to love and trust the humaneness of the man.

Ethical Religion not only presents a point of view; it also reveals the personality of the writer. Ethical Societies, like other religious organisations, are found, in the last analysis, to be dependent upon the characters, the moral individualities, of their leaders and teachers. In this respect, also, this book has a work to perform in the Ethical Cause; and it will become more and more a precious legacy. Ethical Societies, not falling back upon the idea of a Personal Creator or of a unique personal Saviour, are by necessity compelled, as well as by inherent preference inclined, to look in democratic fashion to the influence of their own members upon one another as the most abundant source of moral strength and inspiration. The Doctrine of Personality—but the psychological and democratic, not the supernaturalistic and monarchic doctrine—is the one dogma, if I may be permitted to use the word, of the Ethical Movement. Individuals and nations can be saved only by personal moral character; and individuals and nations will not be completely and ultimately saved except as all are devoting themselves to the task of universal deliverance from misery and wrong. Such is Mr. Salter's message.

This sixpenny reprint of *Ethical Religion* will be welcomed by thousands whose attention and interest have, through the Rationalist

Press Association, been directed to the modern view of the world, and its claims upon all thinking men, as compared with the claims of traditional theology. It will, however, be especially acceptable to those whose advancing thought has led them to separate themselves from all the old religious organisations. More and more these isolated thinkers are beginning to crave for fellowship with others of the same way of thinking and feeling. More and more they are coming to realise that, if ever the moral idealism of the world is to be established on a sure foundation of tested truth, the believers in the new view of the universe must co-operate; they must organise and systematise a mighty propaganda; they must instruct vast numbers of adults, especially of the working classes—by lectures, discussions, and by the dissemination of literature—in the methods and principles of science, as applied to the human mind and to society, for the attainment of the ideals of Ethical Democracy. This volume of Mr. Salter's is peculiarly fitted to awaken to self-consciousness the craving among isolated thinkers for societies for the propagation of Ethical principles, and for the application of such principles to the reform of our present systems of education, of medicine, of laws and of legal practice, of conjugal and parental customs, of economic control and of property-holding, of amusements, recreations, and art. It will not be surprising if many an Ethical Democratic Church which shall come into existence during the next twenty years shall trace its origin to the publication of this volume by the Rationalist Press Association.

STANTON COIT.

October, 1905.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It is only fair to anyone who may take up this book to say that it is made up of lectures given, for the most part, before the Society for Ethical Culture of Chicago. It is due to my colleagues in the Ethical Movement to say that they are not responsible for the views here expressed; that the book nowise claims to represent the Movement, but simply reflects my own attitude of mind upon the various topics treated. Even in discussing "The Basis of the Ethical Movement" I but give my own interpretation of it. The bond of union between the lecturers, as between the members, of Ethical Societies is not a speculative but a moral one. I must add, however, that my own intellectual indebtedness to Professor Adler is so great that it would be difficult to measure it. Many of the thoughts in this volume—probably the best ones—are really his thoughts; he has given me, or at least quickened in my mind, ideas that will never go from me—that are a part of my better self. As I have gone over the proof-sheets of these pages I have felt afresh how deep and constant are my obligations to him.

An occasional criticism which a German translation of some of these lectures[1] received leads me at the outset to disclaim for this volume any scientific pretensions. It is not even a connected series of discourses; there are repetitions in it. These lectures were not written in the first place for publication at all, but to quicken, if they might, the thoughts and lives of those to whom they were addressed. There is possibly one lecture, "What is a Moral Action?" which, as an attempt to analyse and fix a conception, may be thought to have some scientific worth. After writing it, I was gratified to learn that Aristotle had made a somewhat similar analysis—though the master says in a few words what I spread out in as many pages.[2] But had I attempted to write a philosophical treatise, the whole method would have been different. I

[1] Published under the title *Die Religion der Moral*, translated by [Professor Dr.] Georg von Gizycki, Leipzig and Berlin, Wilhelm Friedrich, 1885. A Dutch translation of the same, by the hand of the Rev. P. H. Hugenholtz, Jr., of Amsterdam, appeared in 1888 under the title, *Zedelijke Religie*, Amsterdam, Tj. van Holkema.

[2] See the *Nicomachean Ethics*, ii. 4, § 3.

should then, perhaps, have been able to clear up some of the confusion and inconsistencies with which my thoughts may seem to be involved. For example, I should have attempted to explain my inability to assent either to Theism on the one hand, or to Positivism on the other; I should have sought to reconcile varying points of view in speaking of religion, God, ethics, Christianity; I should have attempted particularly to develop my own theory of ethics, which I cannot call either Utilitarian or Intuitional. I say "attempted," for I do not assume that my intellectual positions are necessarily final and complete; speaking from my own brief experience, the intellectual life is one of change and progress, and it is possible that, in attempting to state my views philosophically, I should be led somewhat to modify and enlarge them.

My purpose in allowing this book to come before the public is not intellectual, but practical and moral. I do not ask scholars to read it, but men and women who are in the midst of the stress of life. My only fear is that it may be too scholastic for the latter class, as I know it lacks too much in thoroughness and precision to satisfy the former. But if it should by chance refresh or invigorate, or help to refine, the moral life of anyone who reads it; if it should stir in anyone a divine discontent with himself and the state of society about him; if it should give anyone courage to fight with the evil and contend for the good in the world; if it should nourish anyone's secret hope that there is but one outcome of the course and evolution of things—namely, the victory of the good—if it should thus make anyone more gladly co-operate with the deep tendency of things, then I should count myself happy indeed.

I wish to thank Mr. A. W. Stevens, of Cambridge, for valuable counsels and assistance as the book was passing through the press.

W. M. S.

Chicago, March, 1889.

ETHICAL RELIGION

I.

ETHICAL RELIGION

THE moral nature is that by which we transcend ourselves and enter into an ideal region. Science, with its methods of observation and experiment, is limited to the world as it is. Ethics is essentially the thought of what ought to be. It is not an account of man as he is, nor is it a transcript and summary abstract of the facts of society; it declares the law after which man should act, and in obedience to which society should be constituted. Ethics, in a word, holds up the picture of our ideal selves, and gives us back society transfigured. For man has two sides to his nature—one looking out on what is, the other on the better that might be. It is a meritorious task to analyse the body and brain and mind of man; to explore conscientiously and classify systematically the facts of human society. But psychology and sociology do not take the place of ethics, nor even give its indispensable foundation. In the strict sense of the word, science—the science of man as truly as any other—knows nothing of right and wrong, but only of what is; of facts, and the law of their connection. To the pure understanding, virtue and vice do not exist. These notions arise in virtue of our judgment upon facts; and the organ of that judgment is other than that by which we learn of and explain the facts themselves: men call it Conscience. It pronounces upon the worth of facts; for they may sometimes seem as firm as the earth and as constant as day and night, and yet have no moral right to be. Such are injustice, unscrupulous self-assertion, wrong—though they may be continuous with the course of history; and all the laws and institutions created under their influence are without binding force or obligation.

The safety and sanity of life consist in keeping in mind the higher ends and laws of our existence. For man is not only to know, but to do and to achieve. Strange, is it not, that man should not be content with what he sees; that he should turn his back on the known and familiar in search of something better; that he should stake his life sometimes on a hope or dream of his mind? Yet this, too, belongs to man: it is the ideal ends of human life calling on him for their accomplishment; and he, simple and loyal, does not fail to hear.

Ethical religion would turn men's thoughts this way. It would inspire to a new confidence in ideas. It would be essentially a practical religion, not practical and ideal, but practical because ideal. It would lay on men a burden, assign to them a task—a burden the only relief from which is in action; a task which is unescapable till it be accomplished. Like an architect's plan, an idea means nothing in itself: it proposes a new form of life, as the plan

involves a new structure. For as the artist, whose soul images some form of the beautiful, seizes the brush or the chisel to portray it; as the thinker's burning thoughts drive him to utterance, so in the truly moral nature every idea of the good becomes a necessity, every thought of the higher a command; all that we dream of and that seems so far away becomes an end and goal for our action and our life. Yet how rarely is the full practical significance of the ideal side of human nature realised! In what illusions do men permit themselves in thinking of the ideal!

First, there is the æsthetic or sentimental mistake. Men wander into an ideal region to luxuriate there. The good is an object of delight; they contemplate it, love it, worship it, they say —do everything but obey it. Much of the religion of our day, orthodox and other, is but a kind of spiritual revelling, wherein men allow themselves the use of all kinds of fine sentiments and phrases, yet after which life is as flat as ever. This is unpractical idealism, but only because it is false idealism. That ideas are but the pattern after which we are to fashion our lives is not realised; the element of respect for them is wanting. If a man is not in the mood to act, if he will not become better, let him not think the ideas of the better at all. It is a kind of profaning of them to face them, and not begin to act as they command.

Closely akin to this æsthetic or sentimental mistake is the philosophical mistake of regarding the ideal as another world alongside of the actual world. It is so easy to those who are accustomed to deal with ideas to think of them as real, substantial things. They become so familiar with them that the natural order of human thought is inverted; and the ideas are spoken of as real, and the actual world as an appearance. This seems to have been the Platonic view. Goodness, justice—moral ideas, as well as all others—Plato looked at as self-existent, independent entities. The ideal world was another literal world like our own, only more perfect. If this were so, what should we have to do but to lift our thoughts to that ideal world, and there find the rest and peace that are denied to us here?

That might be one kind of religion; but surely it would not be a practical religion. And what is more, it would be an illusory religion; for there is no such ideal world as Plato pictures. The Platonic world in its moral aspect is nothing more than the world as we should like to see it, the world as it ought to be. It is, in truth, nothing but an ideal for our world; and to transform this actual order of our human life into an image of it would be the task of a practical religion. The truest word that could be addressed to us is, If thou wilt ever see the perfect, thou must create it: till that time thou rangest over the earth or through the heavens in vain! The idea only of perfection is in us; the perfect itself is to be. Men ask, Can we be satisfied with such a view; can we be content to regard all that is higher and better only as a thought of our minds? But a noble mind does not first ask, What is satisfactory? but, What is true? And I am sure that one who has been caught up by the thought of the higher, and felt that the burden and the glory of accomplishing it rested upon him, would feel the richest satisfactions denied him if told that the higher was already real, and he had only to open some fancied spiritual eyes to discern it. What meaning, what significance, would there be in our lives, with grand thought and purpose stirred, to learn that that which we were to do is already accomplished? "Certainly, cousin," said the gallant Earl of Pembroke, on coming up to the Earl of Derby before Auberoche, and finding the battle already won, "you have neither been courteous nor behaved honourably to fight my enemies without waiting for me, seeing that you had sent for me." That is an unsatisfactory view of life which leaves us nothing to do, which fixes on us no

great responsibilities, which encircles us with no grand trusts. In truth, in our heart of hearts, we want to do, we want to dare; we do not care even to be assured of victory: there is a profound something in us which disdains the need of such assurances.

And as the philosophical mistake is to the highest type of mind not only untrue and delusive, but unsatisfactory rather than satisfactory, so is the theological mistake. Theology gathers all our thoughts of the higher and better together, and conceives them in the form of a perfect person who rules and guides the world. There is a noble side to theology: I mean, of course, not as savages or narrow bigots, but as pure and lofty souls have conceived it. God is the perfect; there are no limitations, no failings there—measureless goodness, infinite justice, make up that image of the mind. And if the only alternative were between the world as it is, with no thought of anything above it by which to try it, and this lofty ideal of excellence which might be ever kept in mind, I do not see how we could hesitate in pronouncing which would be the better. We *must* look on all that is from some ideal standpoint; we must keep in our minds some high and unfailing standard of excellence; and until provision is made for this in the new order of things, the old belief will remain, and deserve to remain. For man has these two sides to his nature, of which I have spoken, and the most perfect knowledge of what is will not take the place of the thought of what ought to be. But the noble side of theology is easily disengaged from theology itself. When one ceases to believe in God in the ordinary sense, one does not need to drop flat to the world and life as we see them and know them. All that made that image admirable remains—all those higher qualities that we instinctively call divine and that mankind instinctively worships, wherever any hint or suggestion of them appears in human form—goodness, pity, boundless charity, unfailing justice.

We do not find these in the world, we do not see them in ourselves; and so, foolish creatures that we are, we jump to the conclusion that they are in another world, that they belong to God. And here is the ignoble side to theology; for not only is the personal Deity of theology illusory, but by gathering the divine qualities into a form outside of man it allows us to forget that they are qualities for man, and religion becomes the worship of something already existing, instead of the sense of a burden and a task. *We* are to become divine: we are to make this world a scene of justice. All that men have gathered into the form of a God is but the image of our possible selves. We make a myth of love and justice, when we say that they are actually ruling in the world, as Christian believers hold; or as Emerson says, that "though ministers of justice fail, justice never," and that the ethical laws are self-executing, instantaneous.[1] Justice is for ever failing in the world. Whenever ministers of justice fail, it fails; for it acquires a real existence only in those who execute it. Apart from them, it is only what ought to be, nothing that is. There are no self-executing, instantaneous, ethical laws; though one might well, when one thinks of all the unrequited wrong there is in the world, wish to heaven that there were. The laws are over us, but they wait for us to execute them; they are shorn of their intent, as our lives are of their significance, if we do not execute them. We can only say that the ethical laws *should* rule in our lives, that justice for ever calls for ministers; and of love, not that it is supreme in the world, but let love, as Buddha said, even the love that fills the mother's heart as she watches over her only child, animate all. For the ideal itself of the old religions is not essentially different from that of the new. The old, however, say, The ideal does rule; the new will say, Let it rule! The old religions appear to open to us the

[1] "The Preacher."

secrets of what lies behind the veil; the new will take those august secrets, and make them in all their grandeur the aim and the rule of human life. The old religions leave us on our knees in rapt contemplation and worship; the new will summon us to stand erect, and to believe that all men have worshipped, all that they have dreamed of, all that has seemed so far above them and beyond them, men and women in the future are to become and to realise.

But why, if man's ideals do not reveal anything outside ourselves, but only indicate what we ourselves should be and do—why do we speak of devotion to them as religion at all? I do not covet that word, and disbelieve in all the prevailing forms of religion. I do not begin with any attempt to compromise with them. And yet I am driven to speak of religion—not indeed in the common way, as of something additional to morality, but of morality as religion.

This may be made evident in two ways. Religion from the purely human side might be defined as man's supreme interest; whoever has an absorbing concern may be said to have a religion. We often hear persons spoken of as religiously devoted to some object, religiously faithful in some attention, some regard, some affection. There are those who have memories that are to them a religion—statesmen to whom the service of their country has been a religion, reformers who give their lives and fortunes in religious devotion to the service of some idea. Those who care for no one thing more than another, who have no enthusiasm, who are listless and cannot be conceived as rising to any height of self-devotion—these are properly the irreligious people of any time. In vain would the most perfect theory of life and the universe be called a religion, if it could not stir the souls of men, if it could not take hold of life and mould it into higher forms. If morality then—if the thought of the good becomes supreme over all other thoughts in the minds of any, if it enlists their feelings and masters their life, it is their religion. I believe, indeed, that there is no other thought that wins so instinctive a reverence as this of the good; that conceptions of the Deity and plans for a truer society take deep hold of men only as they in some sense image or embody it. The question whether morality can become a religion for men in general is the question whether men in general are capable of unselfish admiration; whether they can love the good unmoved by personal fears and hopes, because it is the good, and has an intrinsic charm for them. I do not doubt it. I believe we ordinarily think too meanly of man. The higher nature is in us all: it is not often appealed to, and it is perhaps for this very reason that human life remains on so low a level. Let a new religion arise which should dare to take man at his best, which should summon him to justice and generosity and all nobleness, solely because these are his true and proper life, and I believe the world would be astonished at the answer.

But religion may also be defined from the objective side. In this aspect, it is man's relation with what is ultimate and supreme in the world. The truest religion would be that one in which the supreme interest gathers about that which is really supreme and ultimate in the world. Now, morality, truly interpreted, does bring man into contact with the final nature of things. Whatever else I may doubt about, I cannot doubt the law of duty—that there is a right and a wrong; that the right obliges me, that I ought to do it. It makes no difference that I have learned this law, that others have learned it before, that I know little more about it than I have received or been taught; it makes no difference that I do not know it now perfectly, that I may err sometimes in my judgments about it. Still, I am sure, as Dorothea in the story was,[1] that there is a perfect right if I could only find it. Sometimes I wish to do the right; and sometimes,

[1] *Middlemarch.*

again, it seems hard, forbidding, and I do *not* wish to do it. But the right itself does not change with my wishes and wants. I might unlearn it; I might, under the solicitations of some desire or passion, juggle myself into the belief that it no longer existed. Yet the right would not itself cease because my thought of it ceased. I might die and others take my place, yet the right would exist for them as truly as it had existed for me. Whenever, wherever, two persons arise and look into each other's faces, the law of mutual reverence and respect—the law of justice we call it—obtains. If they do not own it, it is the law all the same; if they act contrary to it, and defy every prescription of it, it is the law all the same. Plainly, men do not make this law, but simply find it. If there are other rational beings than men, it applies to them just as truly; the law is a universal law for all rational intelligence. As little do the earth and the stars make the law of gravitation which they obey, as does man or the combined host of rational beings throughout the universe make the law of duty. And though no God were, as God is ordinarily conceived, the law would not cease to be. It is not made, and cannot be changed by God or man; it belongs to the nature of things. Yes, more truly than the law of gravitation does it belong there. I can see no necessity in the law of gravitation; I can conceive that there might be a different law than this according to which bodies attract one another directly as their mass and inversely as the square of their distance from one another. But no other law is conceivable for rational beings than that of justice, of mutual reverence and respect; never conceivably could it become right to think lightly of another human or any rational being. And yet men have failed in reverence, in respect, for others; have unblushingly used others, are so failing and using them to-day. How rarely has the law been obeyed The law is over all, though it were never obeyed.

In this way morality becomes religion He alone does a genuinely moral act who does it because he must; because he nature of things bears down upon him to do it. For the crystal, religion would be to become a crystal; to own the pressure that would yield the perfect form. For man, it can only be to be a man, to perform the human part of the universal task. Morality is simply one form of the universal law; and in the yielding to its demands man is lifted out of himself; and as the tides of ocean throb "respondent to the far-off orbs," so do his pulses beat in unison with the movement of the universe. Yet how little is the transcendent significance of morality realised in these days! How often are divine and eternal things contrasted with it! Ethics covers simply the equities and amenities of this world, it is sometimes said. But there is no equity of this world; there is only equity, as good, as commanding on any other shining planet as on this. "Beyond and above the moral virtues the soul needs a religious life, fed from above"—so reads a Unitarian tract. Whence come, then, the moral virtues? From below, from prudence, from the sense of decency, from long-sighted selfishness? They who think so never breathed the climate of morality. Channing, when a youth of nineteen, wrote: "All my sentiments and affections have lately changed. I once considered mere moral attainments as the only object I had to pursue. I have now solemnly given myself up to God." This is an unmeaning antithesis, a part of the falsehood of the old religious culture, which he afterwards himself detected; for twenty years later he wrote: "The love of God is but another name for the love of essential benevolence and justice," and the object of religion is, not to "raise us to something higher than morality, for that would be to raise us above God himself, but to give us sublime ideas of morality." Ethics is a pure concern of man with man, it is often said; it is religion that binds us to a higher order of things. Yet ethics is nothing but the response which man and man

make to the higher order of things; for the reason of justice is, not that another wants it and I choose to give it, but that he ought to have it and I ought to give it. The duty is absolute, not conditioned on our will or thought, but given to us in and by the nature of things. Ethics realised in its meaning is religion; it is the only religion for the rational man. In my humblest human service, I may be conscious of owning the call which a higher—nay, the highest—makes upon me. Aspiration, reverence, awe, all those sentiments so often contrasted with morality, are but uncompleted morality; and when the moral act is done, ecstasy is its sign—ecstasy, which is the grace heaven sets upon the moment in which the soul weds itself to the perfect good.

In speaking of an ethical, an essentially practical religion, I have not in mind simply a few superficial improvements on the old religions. I mean not simply a little more "practical work," a little more attention to the necessities of the poor, a little better education of the young among them, a making of their life a little cleaner, neater, healthier, more respectable. An ethical religion would mean this, but because it meant vastly more. It is nothing else than a changed thought of the nature of religion which I have in mind—namely, that it can be no longer for rational men to-day to worship or pray, but to have the sense of a task, the sense of somewhat limitless to accomplish, and to accomplish it. The Christian Church sings in one of its hymns:—

"Oh, where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came?
But holy Church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same."

Might it not go on praying a thousand years more, and no better result come of it? If we must pray, let us pray to men; for there all the trouble lies. Could you, O Churches, but open the hearts of your worshippers, as you seek to move the heart of God, the need for all other prayer would soon be gone. Religion is not seeing the evil and wrong in the world, and trusting that somehow in the counsels of God it is all for the best, but in confidently attacking the evil and the wrong, and in leading on the good, as John Stuart Mill says, to its distant and yet not uncertain triumph. The truest revelation, the truest voice of the nature of things, is not in what we see, but in our thoughts of what ought to be. Trust thy dreams, O Reformer! thou comest never so nigh to the heart and spirit of things as in them. This that thou seest, this that seems so strong, so secure, so impregnable, will after a time vanish away; and what thou thinkest of, what thou art called visionary for daring to think of, will *then* be the real!

To the finest flower of New England culture, to Emerson, was given the insight into the essential identity between morals and religion.[1] I scarcely know what true thought of mine the reader will not find, stripped of its imperfections of statement, in him. It was he who long ago spoke of the consolation, the hope, the grandeur that come alone out of the culture of the moral nature.[2] Theology was to him the rhetoric of morals.[3] "The mind of this age," he says, "has fallen away from theology to morals. I conceive it to be an advance." Unbelief to him was losing hold of the moral intuitions.[4] Religion was the practices, private and social, in honour of the moral sentiment.[5] The commanding fact which he never lost sight of was the sufficiency of this sentiment.[6] He will not allow that ethics do not satisfy affection,[7] or that they give only a rule, and not the spirit by which the rule is animated.[8] All the religion we have, he says, is the ethics of

[1] "The Sovereignty of Ethics" (in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*).
[2] "Divinity School Address."
[3] "Character" (in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*).
[4] "The Preacher."
[5] "Sovereignty of Ethics."
[6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid.*
[8] "Character" (in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*).

one or another holy person.[1] And whenever the sublimities of character are incarnated in a man, we may rely that awe and love and insatiable curiosity will follow in his steps.[2] "No man," he says, "can tell what religious revolutions await us in the next years; and the education in the divinity colleges may well hesitate and vary. But the science of ethics has no mutations; and whoever feels any love or skill for ethical studies may safely lay out all his strength and genius in working that mine. The pulpit may shake, but this platform will not. All the victories of religion belong to the moral sentiments." He has a faith that America shall introduce a pure religion,[3] since a true nation loves its vernacular tongue, and will not import its religion, as we have ours from Judea.[4]

It is a grand task to attempt to translate the old truths of the moral nature into the language of to-day. Theology is not more, but less, than the truth. Life in the future shall not be less, but more freighted with significance than ever before; for no longer shall men be wondering spectators of a divine task accomplishing in the world, but themselves the accomplishers of it, themselves the hands by which the eternal purpose realises itself.

II.

THE IDEAL ELEMENT IN MORALITY

THE current views of morality are low and conventional. Even the churches, which should inspire us with an ideal view of life, talk of "mere morality." Morality is thought to be without mystery;[5] worship is contrasted with it.[6] A celebrated English preacher says: "Sometimes, losing sight of divine and eternal things, Christianity becomes a moral discipline without the inspiration of religious awe and love and hope and fear."[7] Morality itself, then, is not one of those divine and eternal things; there is nothing about it to touch the soul with love or awe, with hope or fear! Yes, it is often said that morality cannot live save as it is grounded in religion; that it is but a branch from the vigorous root of religion.[8]

Now, in contrast with these conventional views, I wish to bring out the ideal meaning of morality. I wish to show that it brings before us great thoughts, and thoughts touching the deep places of the soul. I wish to show that there is something in it which lays hold of eternity; that it may well, and does in all but the coarsest natures, stir

[1] "Sovereignty of Ethics."
[2] "Character."
[3] "Sovereignty of Ethics."
[4] "Character."
[5] *Natural Religion*, p. 132; cf. the passage on p. 133: "At this point it is, at this disappointing identification of religion with morality, that the breach takes place. Can, then, religion mean no more than that we should *pay our debts*, *keep our engagements*, *and not be too hard on our enemies?*" (The italics are ours.) This is all then that morality means!
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[7] R. W. Dale, *Contemporary Review*, April, 1883.
[8] So Channing said, in early life (*Life*, A.U.A. ed., p. 74); but later he wrote, "To love God is to love morality in its most perfect form," and the office of religion is not to raise us "to something higher than morality," but to give us "sublime ideas of morality" (*Life*, pp. 230, 231). The conventional view is well brought out in *Something above Morality*, by Rev. Richard Metcalf—a tract published by the American Unitarian Association, Boston.

awe and love and hope and fear. I wish to show that religion, the only true religion—though it nowhere exists now—is but the blossoming out of morality; that morality is its root, instead of being a branch from the root of religion. And I am particularly anxious to show this to the satisfaction of those who are not accustomed to what are called idealistic modes of thought.

Let me distinctly say at the outset that the ideal view of morality with which I am now concerned does not rest upon idealism in philosophy. There is no reason why the philosophical materialist should not join me in what I shall say of morality. As matter of fact, there seems to be as much moral idealism among those who call themselves materialists as among any other class of people. Think for a moment of the revolutionists in Russia—most of them young men and women, to whom, it is said, you could not offer greater affront than to call them idealists.[1] They are materialists; they do not believe in a God or a future life; the world of the senses is alone real to them. Yet where do they place their hope? In what they see, in what their senses can lay hold of, in the actual order of social and political life that for ever confronts them? No; but in something they do not see, in something that is not and never has been in Russia—an era of freedom, an era of democracy, an era of brotherhood. So long as this era is not, it is but a possibility, an idea. And for that possibility, for that idea, they leave sometimes high rank and station, become almost ascetics in their mode of life, and are ready to go to Siberia or the scaffold. Nothing, not life itself, is so dear to them as the idea, the dream, of their imaginations and their hearts.

Nor is moral idealism inconsistent with the utilitarian theory of the origin and sanction of our moral ideas. Utilitarianism says that our notions of right and wrong do not come from some magical intuition or revelation, but arise in the natural course of human experience and development; and that morality has its ultimate sanction in its tendency to promote the general good, the universal happiness. I am not concerned with this or any other theory today, but with the content of morality, the ideal nature of which is often so faintly realised. As matter of fact, utilitarians are as often idealists, in the sense in which I am now using the word, as the advocates of any other theory of morality are. Jeremy Bentham is called the father of modern Utilitarianism; yet what greater reformer has England had during the last hundred years in legislation, politics, prison discipline, and education, than Bentham? Of him and James Mill it has been well said that "believing that theory was all-powerful, that no hard-and-fast line could be drawn between the theoretically sound and the practically feasible, and that every simple and intelligible system only required energy and determination to convert it at once into a body of maxims and motives, they set to work in all directions with undaunted applications of their brand new doctrines to the crude material of fact."[1] This is the very spirit of idealism, as I am concerned with it at this time. Reform is essentially idealistic. Every reformer takes his stand not with what is, but with what he conceives ought to be; not with the customs and traditions and institutions that have come down from the past, but with the ideas that he believes must rule in the future. Successful reform means, indeed, conquering a fact by an idea.

Nor, in speaking of the ideal meaning of morality, in trying to show that it calls us away from what we see and know to what we can only think of, let me be understood as endeavouring to transcend the realm of the human mind. Shakespeare is involved in the

[1] M. Leroy-Beaulieu, in Lalor's *Cyclopædia of Political Science;* article "Nihilism."

[1] G. S. Bower's *Hartley and James Mill*, p. 227. See also Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 75.

same apparent contradiction when he speaks of

"......thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."[1]

But moral ideas, however much they may contrast with reality, are thoughts of the human mind. To win them and to live in them is not to lose ourselves, but to enlarge ourselves. We are not merely so much space as is covered by our bodies, but minds that can take in the past and the future, that can wander over the earth and climb to the stars, that can muse on what is and think of the better that might be. There is no outside to the mind; the grandest, divinest, most perfect things are simply thoughts of what may be.

With these explanations let me proceed to my task. What are more natural and commonplace experiences with us than our wishes and wants? But if we reflect a moment, it is easy to see that they have an ideal significance. We do not wish for what we have or for what we are already; we wish for what we have not or are not, for what we are without, for what, in the literal sense, we *want*. What is, then, the wished-for object but a possibility or an idea? If we stop to think, we shall see that all our wishes and wants go out to ideas. It may seem strange that we should often set more store by what is not than by what is. Why should we? it may be asked. We cannot answer save by saying that it seems a part of our nature to do so. As it belongs to us to hear and see, so it does to think of what we do not hear or see, to be discontented; to reach out, to form ideals. Perhaps it is a provision for progress, for life, for movement; for if one is conscious of no wants, if he has no wishes, nor ideals, what is he practically but dead, without an incentive to movement, without the possibility even of becoming more than he is?

Our ideas are, however, of two kinds. It is a long way from a child's craving for a doll or a sled to a young man's or young woman's desire to lead a pure, blameless life, or the mature person's craving to see justice reflected in the general arrangements of society. There is a difference, indeed, all through life between our longings after what we may call happiness, comfort, prosperity, enjoyment, and those after goodness, unselfishness, and purity. We cannot say we ought to be happy, but only that we should like to be; but we do say that we ought to be good, and this even if we do not wish to be, if our matter-of-fact desires chance at any moment to be clean of a contrary sort. In a word, the note of authority seems to go along with a certain class of ideas. We live amid ideas to the extent that we really live at all; but some of the ideas we simply crave, and others seem to bind us—some we can make a goal for our lives if we choose, and others seem fixed for us, so that we cannot turn from them without inwardly experiencing some kind of disgrace. There is no necessary dishonour in not having a home and a family, or in not entering on a business career. But with a home, to be unfaithful to it, or in business to forget the laws of truth and honour there, is morally blameworthy. To read this or that book on a leisure afternoon, or to leave our books altogether and take a stroll, or, once out, to turn our steps along this street or that—there is nothing to bind us in any of these alternatives; it may be that no one is better than another; the only "better" may be to suit our mood, to do according to our own sweet will. But often we are in the face of alternatives, one of which has a distinct urgency about it; we know it to be better, even though we do not choose it; it seems to have a claim upon us whether we will or no, and our real task is not to wait and see if our natural choice will not change, but to change it, to choose ever the true and the good. Now, those ideas (from out the countless number that throng our minds) that have this urgency about them, that are intrinsically better and seem to constrain us,

[1] *Hamlet*, act i., scene 4.

we call moral ideas; the sum of them make what we call morality.

Morality is thus in essence ideal. It is not what men do, but what they ought to do; not what they wish, but what they ought to wish. It is as with truth. Truth is not what one happens to think; it is not this or that belief which one may cherish, but that which corresponds to the fact of things. And so with art: a picture or a statue is not a work of art because the brush or the chisel has been used in producing it, but because it reflects in some degree the ideal of the beautiful. Let me use some very simple illustrations of the ideal nature of morality. Happily, kindliness belongs by a gift of nature to most men; it finds a special field of operation in the home, where others are brought so near to us—how much sweeter and more beautiful is the life of the family where kindliness is the law! But suppose that in some family this ceases to be the law; that some member of it forgets to show this spirit, easily loses his temper, and grows irritable, surly, and cross; and that this affects the life of the family, and the quiet, genial kindliness that was wont to be there goes and leaves faint traces of itself—do we hesitate to say that kindliness is still the true ideal for that family; that, though it is no longer there, it ought to be there, and all should be pervaded with this spirit? Because the facts have come to be contrary to the ideal, have we now doubt about the ideal itself? Surely not. What difference does it make that mankind has come from a time of unspeakable barbarism in the past, when there was no kindliness and no ideal of it; that men have learned the ideal, that many have still to learn it; that the practice of the best of us hardly corresponds to our ideal, that the ideal itself may grow completer and finer? The only question is, Is it not a true ideal; could there have been progress in the past in any other direction than towards it; is it possible that there can be any progress in the future that is away from it? No; the family life of man may go actually in one way or another, but it can only go one way and go right. There is an ideal for it that we cannot conceive as changing.

Or take an illustration from the political life of men. The prime concern of the State should be for justice. I do not say this has been the case, or that it is perfectly so now. The State has often stood simply for power; the head of the State has often made others his slaves—men have held property, even life, at his mercy. But does anyone hesitate to say that the State should stand for justice; that this makes an ideal for it; that there can be progress only in one direction; that if the State comes to be in the possession of men or classes of men who rule for their own and not for the general good, this would be retrogression? Suppose that any government now makes a distinction between those who are equally men, but are of different colour; or that, in effect, it has one law for the rich and another, or none, for the poor—should we not hear something within us calling and demanding that this be changed? Is there not something commanding, something imperative, in the thought of universal justice? Justice—it is a commonplace word; but is it even in democratic republics a commonplace thing? What is it, then? It is an idea, and one which, though it were never realised, would not cease to give the ideal, and the only ideal, for human government. Not all the tyrants of the past, and no will or combined will of the mightiest to-day, can change it. The supreme political problem is to find it out completely, and to establish it perfectly; and if human governments do not establish it, not the idea, but they, will be humbled and cast down. He who stands by justice—let him be aware of it—and who stands the firmer and speaks the louder when justice seems to fail, stands by an idea. Let him keep his faith though it does fail, for in truth justice might never be on this earth, and yet not lose one particle of its ideal worth and its ideal authority.

Or take an illustration from business life. What honourable man does not place truth before success in business? Who does not feel that he ought to be truthful, whether it will be advantageous to him or not? Who does not feel that truth gives the ideal for business life, and own it in his thoughts, if not in his practice—and want to know how business can be arranged so that there will not be even the semblance of a necessity for anything else? What is many a man's secret disturbance about the matter but a kind of confession that the idea ought to rule, that something he catches a glimpse of within is in its nature commanding and authoritative, and that with it he must somehow make peace? What matters it that men once had little or no notion of truthfulness, that they have learned it, that many have still to learn it, that it is still an ideal and in advance of the general practice of men? I only ask, Is our confidence in it any less on these accounts; is not progress only towards it; is not all departure from it retrogression; though men should cease to own it, even in the scant measure they do now, would they not be culpably, unmistakably in the wrong?

And so, with all the institutions of society and all the relations of human life, there is an ideal and a law for them; and for each and every separate one an ideal and a law fitted to its particular nature and constitution. For the family, for the State, for business in all their departments, there is a true and perfect way of conducting them; for every individual life there is an ideal which it is to find and follow. For even if we have not grasped the ideal, we believe that it is there. We know that we do not make and cannot change the conditions of bodily health; that we have to learn them; that there is, indeed, an ideal method of living which would ensure to every one who would follow it perfect physical health and strength. We believe that the conditions of social welfare and prosperity, the sources of peace and satisfaction for each individual soul, are equally fixed. There is some form of society which would secure universal well-being; there is some ideal type of thinking, feeling, and acting that would, when realised, make a perfect human being. We know the law that makes this marvel of order, this regularity, this punctuality, this movement without jar which we see in the outward world. How simple, and yet how far-reaching, is the law of gravitation! But the law that would turn this chaos of human life into a cosmos we do not know. It differs from the law of gravitation very plainly, in that it does not act necessarily; if it did, we should have already an order here comparable to that we see in the material world. But we have to discover it; and when we shall have discovered it, we shall have to give it the free consent of our wills. We have, indeed, already gained some notion of it. We know to a certain extent what makes for order and peace among men. What we call the moral ideal is so much of it as we know. But how much more is there yet to know! Even the idea of justice, which is the best part of our moral ideal; who understands it, who fathoms it, who sees all that it means and must mean to the future?

Ethics calls us away to these visions of the higher and the better. It is a science of life, not as it is, but as it ought to be—as it would be if it were transfigured with its idea. It means looking at life from the highest standpoint; it means unhesitatingly taking our stand there, and fearing not to criticise the actual life of men according to the ideal standard. It may be no welcome task to pass judgment on ourselves; yet, if we are real in the matter of moral culture, I do not see how we can avoid doing so. If we have given way to unworthy passion, if we have done an ungenerous thing, if for selfish reasons we have broken a promise, if in any way we have followed the lower rather than the higher reason, let us not treat the matter as of no consequence, but remember it and judge

ourselves for it; yes, better in some way to try to atone for it than to pass it by with indifference. Still less welcome is it to pass judgment upon others. How easy to excuse a friend where we would not excuse ourselves! How hard to have any one whom we love sink in our estimation! The question is: Which comes first, loyalty to a person or to truth? I am sure that, while there is often not enough of charity in the world, there is also much false charity; and that while nothing is more uncalled for than censoriousness, and the presuming to be keeper of another's conscience; and that at no time are we so called to purify ourselves of all mere personal feeling as when we judge of another; yet when truth compels us, we should judge, remembering that not out of any personal regard are we to forget the requirements of the ideal standard.

Moreover, as we read history we are to take our moral judgment with us. How great the temptation will often be to abandon our moral convictions, so frequently do the facts of history seem to do violence to them!

"Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne"—

how does the sense of this make us almost doubt at times whether there is any right or any wrong; whether our ideas of right, instead of unalterable laws of human action, are not entirely relative and conventional things, or even illusory! These are the temptations of the moral idealist. Refreshing are the words of those who do not fail in their moral convictions, however poorly these may be confirmed by the actual course of history. Seneca, speaking of the Roman Consul Sulla, called his fortune "the crime of the gods."[1] I confess to an unbounded admiration for the saying. Though it savours of impiety, it hides what is to my mind the deepest and the only piety. For what was the history, and particularly the end, of that man, starting as he did with a fortune given him by a courtesan, making his way by the help of it over thousands of the wronged and slain to the arbitrary dictatorship of his city; retiring from office in old age, with ambition sated, to his villa to practise again the voluptuous habits of his youth; and then, finally dying peacefully, his funeral attended by hundreds whom he had captivated by his recklessness, and whose minds he had debauched—what is all this but a satire on every sentiment of justice? "History alone could have dared to tell us of a peaceful end to such a life as his; and history, again and again, repeats the defiance to our moral sense."[1] Was it not natural for Seneca, with the popular view of the gods as guiding and ruling in the affairs of men, to say that this good fortune of Sulla was the crime of the gods? What grand impiety—what a measuring not only of men, but of gods, by the standard of moral ideas! For this is ever the test of a true man: will he yield up his ideal conviction to any amount of contrary facts; will he take his stand and keep it *contra mundum*, and though the ruling powers of the world, visible and invisible, were opposed to him? To lose the sense of an ideal right, to yield it up before a show of might; that is the only infidelity, the only atheism we need have any fear of. Then, indeed, a fairer world than that we see about us—the world of moral truth and moral beauty—would be shattered and broken, and in the ruins it were hardly worth while to live. In this feeling, though I would stand alone, I do not stand alone, and have the company of men called utilitarians and materialists as well as many others.

John Stuart Mill eloquently protested that he would rather go to hell than do violence to his moral nature by calling a Being good who bore no traces of the character designated by that word.[2] A

[1] *Consolatio ad Marciam*, xii. 6.

[1] *Contemporary Review*, February, 1881; article on "The Moral Influence of George Eliot."

[2] *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, chap. vii.

passage from Huxley reveals the same noble holding of moral distinctions:[1] "For suppose theology established the existence of an evil deity—and some theologians, even Christian ones, have come very near this—is the religious affection to be transferred from the ethical ideal to any such omnipotent demon? I trow not. Better a thousand times that the human race should perish under his thunderbolts than it should say, 'Evil, be thou my good.'"

But, with all the most discouraging facts in the world, there is no evidence that the ultimate powers of the world are evil. Only those who deny freedom and responsibility to man, and affix all blame for whatever is wrong upon the ultimate nature of things, can call that ultimate nature evil. Let responsibility for wrong be fixed where it belongs—on the human doers of it—and the sky is cleared of the hideous spectre of an evil god, and the ideals of justice and of goodness come naturally to be regarded as the voice of the ultimate nature of things, and obedience to them and working for them against whatever odds, against whatever show of might on the side of wrong and evil, as the truest, the deepest, nay the only piety. The only mistake would be in thinking that those ideals will be accomplished by some power outside ourselves, in thinking of a providential justice and goodness. In truth, so far as we can see, there is no such providential justice and goodness, and the Christian belief is as mythical as the old Roman belief. There were no such gods as Seneca pictured, and there is no such being as the Christian believes in. Justice and goodness have power not outside of us, but in our minds: they are to rule the world, if ever they do, as we surrender ourselves to them and make them rule. Yet they are authoritative, they are binding, they are set fast for us in the nature of things, and by the nature of things; and when all notions of a providential deity are gone, they but shine clearer in their own light, and evidence something in which they are rooted that can never go, that is eternal and unchangeable. Some time humanity will be so aroused to its own true place and calling in the world that such a life and such a death as Sulla's can never again happen; society will be so ordered, individuals will be so treated and judged, that a man like Sulla will have no chance of rising, or, if he has, will die in universal contempt. The fortune of Sulla was the crime of the Roman people. Society will always have such monsters of iniquity till it purges itself; and the task set for it, the task from which it cannot escape (unless it too is to rot and die), is to purge itself—and religion, the only religion the future can have, must be a voluntary dedication on the part of society to that task.

Alphonso of Castile's words have a charm like those of Seneca. "If he had been present at the creation, he could have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe." Ah, if Alphonso had only realised that a part of creation was there in his own power to re-fashion, if he would! The responsibility for the unequal order of society that prevailed in the Middle Ages, when he lived, was not chargeable on the creator, but on men themselves—and particularly on those lords and princes to the number of which Alphonso belonged. He might easily have given a better ordering to his little part of the universe, and set an example to the other princes about him, whereby oppressions and robberies and all manner of despoilings of the weak by the strong might have in some measure ceased.

It is strange, when we bear in mind the ideal nature of morality, to hear that morality must be based upon facts. Morality is not really a question of facts, but of the right of facts to be, of their correspondence with a standard of the mind. For all scientific hypotheses we must look for a foundation in the world as it is; for they are nothing but

[1] *Critiques and Addresses*, p. 49.

attempted explanations of the actual order of things, and we believe in them more or less, as there is more or less evidence from facts in their favour. But morality is in its nature an ideal and a rule, and we can account for many of the phenomena of history and of human life to-day only on the supposition that morality was not and is not heeded, and perhaps not even thought of. Base morality on facts? Which facts? There are innumerable facts, an induction from which would only give us immorality. The good facts, then? But plainly, this is moving in a circle. In truth, there is nothing on which to base morality. We do not so much find it as demand it in the world.[1] All the separate moral rules may be resolved into the supreme one, to seek the general welfare, the universal good. But who can give a reason for the supreme rule? Indeed, no serious man wants a reason. The supreme command appeals immediately to the human mind; it is an assertion of the human mind. No honest man wants a reason why he should do right, any more than why he should allow the sun to be in the heavens. The sun is there, and he sees it; and joy and light and warmth come, he knows, from living under its influence. So with the idea of the universal good; to know it is to love it; to become simply aware of it is to feel it to be the true sovereign law of our lives. And not to own it, not to own the several forms in which it comes to us, what is this but to make ourselves wanderers and waifs on the earth; yes, to contradict the universal law of existence, since even the atoms own their attractions, even the senseless rain owns its bond to the sea whence it came? Man belongs to the idea of the universal good; he is only himself as he acts from it and for it.

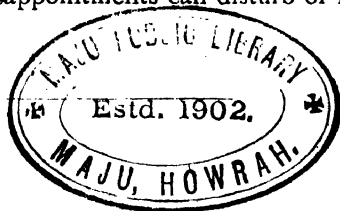
Does ethics, then, give us no great thoughts? That man can respond to a universal good; that he can connect himself with the fortune of those whom he has never seen nor shall see; that he can bless in spirit unborn generations, and reach out to the world to heal it and to lift it up; is there nothing mystical, nothing wondrous, nothing strange in all that? In truth, there is something limitless in human nature, as there is in the good of which it conceives. Our souls crave a perfect good; we feel the pull thitherward, we own the law that points in that direction. Does this stir no awe, nor love, nor hope, nor fear? I know of but one thing in this world that may well excite awe; it is not any spectacle of nature, not any show of power or of beauty, but the thought of the supreme law under which we live, of the ideals that are unalterably set for us, of the perfect goal to which our inmost being tends. We are, indeed, strangers here amid these scenes, where so much meets the eye that afflicts the soul; we cannot avoid picturing our home and proper country as far away, and ourselves as travelling thitherward. What longings seize us as we think of this! what love, what hope, what fear, lest by any chance or carelessness we should lose our way!

What does religion add, then, to ethics; what greater thought does it give us than this of a law that forever encompasses us? Nothing that I can see; and what it attempts to add is, generally at least, *Aberglaube*, superstition. Religion conceives the good in the form of a person, and asserts that he is ruling in the world. But this is an illusion, and really a harmful one. A true, sound, and wholly rational religion—so, because containing no premises that could reasonably be doubted—would be simply a perfected ethics. Morality as custom, as public opinion, as law, has, I well know, to be continually revised and enlarged; and as morality may have been identified with these things, the larger ideas may refuse the name morality as tame and common-place. But morality is in truth a

[1] Amiel, "the sweet-souled Genevan mystic," says: "It is not history which teaches righteousness to the conscience; it is conscience which teaches righteousness to history. The actual is corrupting; it is *we* who rectify it by loyalty to the ideal."

principle, and the enlargement mentioned has always been on the basis of the principles of morality, and has always issued in a larger, fuller moral ideal. Religion seems also to add to morality the thought of heaven; but this, when purely conceived, is not something apart from goodness, but the triumph of goodness. We, too, as believers in the good, look for its triumph. Not yet is the end and issue of things, but far away; though we know not whether these earthly selves shall ever see the triumph, though we can only think of it and know that there will be an outcome of our struggles and pains there.

Religion in the future must not only disengage itself from the mythical elements of the old religions; it must present a higher type of religion. The religions of the past have generally had a taint of selfishness about them. They have held out the hope of recompense; they have not commanded and summoned men in the name of the good, and for its sake alone; they have not taken men out of themselves. I see a new religion arising, basing itself on trust in man; calling to the hitherto unstirred depths of loyalty in him, believing that he can love the good without thought of a reward, that he can rise superior to the motives that ordinarily determine men, that the heaven of principle can rule in the human breast. Man's ignorance as to what will become of him after he dies never disturbed a noble, a truly religious soul. It may drive the timid, the fearful—those so anxious to know whether their poor self-centred selves are going to live again—to despair, or to the comfort, as they call it, of the gospel and the church. Poor souls! let them have the comfort while they may. But they might live on for ever and never know what true blessedness is. This they will not know till they cease to think of themselves, whether they are to live or die, and give themselves over to the good, and live now in the supreme eternal moments. For religion, if it means anything, binds us to a law above us and lifts us out of ourselves. The religious men and women of the future will give themselves to all their dreams of the perfect without questioning or concern; they will know that they are in higher, stronger keeping than any they can themselves devise; that the blessed Powers, which no man can name, contain them and enfold them; that if there is anything of worth in them, *that* will live, and all else they will themselves willingly let die. An ideal perfection is the only ultimate reason for existence. If we do not turn our faces thitherward, our lives, however full of shows and business and plans and works they may be, are without rational significance; and, if we do, there are at bottom no more puzzles or cares or anxieties for us; in our heart of hearts there is a peace and joy that no reverses or disappointments can disturb or mar.



III.

WHAT IS A MORAL ACTION?

WHAT is it that gives a moral quality to an action, that lends it moral worth? I do not mean to contrast moral with immoral actions; but what, of the multitude of our every-day actions against which nothing can be said from a conventional standpoint, deserve to be singled out and have this mark of

honour attached to them—namely, that they are moral actions? Most of our actions are probably simply *un*moral. In our conduct we do as others do about us; we think and act according to the prevailing customs. There is not necessarily any hypocrisy in this; by a kind of natural gravitation we settle into the grooves that are already prepared for us. Not only is there nothing wrong about this, but, relatively speaking, there may be something good. Society, perhaps, is scarcely possible (or was, in the early ages of the world) without something of an instinct of imitation among men, which holds in check caprice and lawless individualism. Still the mere following of custom and usage, however useful to society, cannot be said to rise to the dignity of morality.

A moral act must be our own act. It must spring from conviction. A purely conventional life is without moral significance. We begin really to live when we wake out of this unconscious instinctive following of precedents and customs, and know that we are ourselves and have minds to use, and when we begin to use them. What we do when we are awake, aroused; what expresses our individuality—that has moral worth, and that alone. This is entirely apart from what particular thing we think or do, or whether we even join the popular current again; for, though when one thinks for himself it is unlikely that he will not vary somewhat from the hitherto prevailing custom, the trouble with the conventional life is not as to its particular ideas and customs, but that it is conventional, that it expresses no personal, genuine conviction. A moral action may be in entire accord with what convention demands; yet it will always be vastly more than that. Morality is the assertion of ourselves. How sad is his plight who has no sacred self; who never falls back on a conviction, as a believer on his gods, because he has none; who lives all out-of-doors; whose soul is the empty mirror of the world's passing fashions and shows! A man who once defied a world, and yet lived to see the world come round to him, and is one of the ideal figures in America's history — Wendell Phillips — said in addressing a mixed assembly on the slavery question: "Till you judge men and things on different principles, I do not care much what you think of me; I have outgrown that interesting anxiety."[1] No man rises into the dignity of moral individuality till he says the same. A man should have no other ultimate anxiety than to please the genius of his own bosom. "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist," said Emerson; and it is true in spirit, if not always in form. Man must act for himself, or he is lost. One looks abroad and sees men and women blindly following the ruling traditions in religion, society, politics, with scarcely a serious, lonely thought crossing their minds; they are all lost, and will be till they come home to themselves, and begin to live a real, inward, personal life. The supreme profanation is not against church or sacrament or Bible, but against the clearest, sanest thought of your own mind. I will not say the lesson, but the significance, of morality is independence of public opinion, having the centre and rule of our life not in the world without, but in the world within; so that even if we harmonise with the world without, if we coincide with public opinion, it will be not as an echo, but as a living factor in it.

If, however, a moral act must be our own act, not one merely in accordance with conventional standards, it goes almost without saying that it must be one not merely followed by good results, but one in which those results are intended. We must not only do good, but mean to do good. Yes, the whole properly moral significance of an action is in its intention. Two actions may have exactly the same outward results, yet be separated by a heaven-wide distance in moral worth, according as

[1] *Orations, Speeches, etc.*, p. 66.



they are prompted by one motive or another; and these motives are of course only really known, because alone experienced, by those doing the actions. The attempt is sometimes made to divest ethics of all these inward and, as it is said, mysterious elements, and to reduce it to a question simply of results. Any action is to be counted moral which has good results, or immoral which has evil, quite apart from motives. It is perfectly true that an action does not have good results simply because they are intended—just as a thought is not necessarily true because it aims at the truth. Hell, it has been said, is paved with good intentions, and at any rate we know that the earth is well covered with them, and that often they bring forth little sound or lasting fruit. How many kindhearted persons, for example, give charity in such a way that it does more harm than good! The trouble is not with the kindheartedness or the charity, but with the lack of intelligence that is displayed; and the real remedy is not to depreciate charity, but to light it up with intelligence. An action really ceases to have a moral quality if it does not take advantage of all the light and knowledge by which it may be directed; and those who would turn ethics into a species of social mechanics do not realise that automata would do as well as men for these merely outward effects, perhaps better. Indeed, Professor Huxley says that if some great Power would agree to make him always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of his allowing himself to be turned into a sort of clock, and wound up every morning before he got out of bed, he should instantly close with the offer.[1] What an infinite saving of pains and trouble such an arrangement would be! Yet I doubt if there is one in a hundred or a thousand who would share with Mr. Huxley in such a readiness; who would not rather say, with Lessing, if God held out "truth" in one hand and "seek after truth" in another, that in all humility he would take "seek after truth." Why? Because the other attitude would practically deny the significance of our intellectual being; because we feel that, if the truth is grand, the learning and so knowing the truth is still grander. Any giving of our action over into the hands of another Power is practically saying that our moral being has no significance; while we, on the other hand, are sure that the glory of the moral universe is not alone in the good, but in the willing of the good, in the conscious voluntary practice of it, and would count it better to struggle for and sometimes miss the good than that it should never be learned by finite beings at all. But, whether this be true or not, any such mechanical goodness as Professor Huxley supposes would have no moral quality; even if the results were just the same as those following a properly moral action, no praise or blame would attach to such goodness any more than to an operation of nature. Alexander the Great, for example, took the Greek language and Greek culture, art, and manners wherever he went in his military conquests; and what a benefit to the world was this spread of Greek civilisation! Yet if, as is likely, the passion of Alexander was solely for conquest and military power and renown; if the benefit to the world came simply as an unintended consequence, an incident of his victories—what moral credit has he in the matter? I have heard it argued that it is impossible for a man to follow his own interests without benefiting others; that one, for example, cannot build up a business without giving employment and a livelihood to those who would perhaps otherwise be in need; yes, I have sometimes heard it urged, in extenuation of the great monopolies of our time, that in the nature of the case they cannot exist and maintain themselves save as they bring themselves under the rule of service to others. This is all true enough, perhaps, as matter of fact, but all delusion if the facts are supposed to answer to the

[1] *Lay Sermons, etc.*, p. 340.

requirements of morality. What is the business man or the monopolist intent on?—that is the question which decides whether there is any moral worth in what he does, or not. Are the benefits which come to others something that he aims at, or only the necessary incidents in the accomplishing of his own personal aims? I think, indeed, the introduction of higher motives into business would more or less affect the management and all the details of business; but I can imagine two businesses externally almost exactly alike, the management of one of which would be dominated by a moral impulse, and the other would be without any moral character whatever (which is far from saying that it would have an immoral character). The difference would be all in the thought. Man may go astray many times in what he thinks to be good; but, on the other hand, no action which is without the prompting of the thought of what is good, no matter how externally good and right it may be, can be called a moral action; and every time we sincerely, honestly mean to do what is right, no matter how mistaken we may turn out to be in our judgment, our action has a moral worth. What we mean to do, what we want to do—that is all, from a moral standpoint.

Closely related with this is another mark of a moral action—namely, it is an act that is freely done. Whatever I do under compulsion, under constraint, has no moral worth. Suppose, to take a homely illustration, I rise early in the morning because I am obliged to; because if I am not at the office of my employer by a certain time I shall lose my situation—plainly there is no morality in this; but if I do so, not thus compelled, but simply with the feeling that it is a good habit, and that I ought to form it, I make a mastery of my laziness that has some moral worth. Suppose I return a book to the public library to escape a fine, or on the other hand simply because I know that others want the book, and I ought to consider them as well as myself—would anyone hesitate to say which action alone had any virtue in it? Suppose I live a simple, unpretentious life because I have not the means to live otherwise; or because, though with abundant means, I have a sense of how a man should live, so long as there is so much want and misery in the world about him—one would not need to reflect long before saying which manner of life, though they were, so far as the eye could see, exactly alike, had any moral worth. The economy that when necessitated has almost an air of meanness, becomes divine when practised in obedience to an idea. Take again the case of an employer who yields to his "striking" employees because he is forced to, because they have so arranged matters that if he will not give them an advanced rate of wages he cannot find any workmen; and then of another who does not wait for a strike, and has no reason to fear any, but pays the higher rate simply out of regard for his workmen, and with a thought of their needs and ends as human beings and heads of families—that is, not because he is obliged to, but because he will—and can there be any hesitancy as to which one of these men rises to the dignity of performing a moral action? Freedom, spontaneity, is the note, the very mark, of a moral action. An action dictated by fear is not really a free action—as when King Richard II. of England sought to quell the angry revolt of the peasants by granting them the reforms which they wanted, and gave them letters sealed with his seal, with all their demands formally acceded to; and yet later, when the danger was over, ordered under pain of death that all those who had the King's letters should deliver them up. A righteous act, do we say, succeeded by an unrighteous one? No, never a righteous act at all, but only the forms of righteousness complied with through fear. What we do when no pressure is upon us, when we simply have the thought of what we ought to do, the free, willing expression of the soul within us—that alone is moral.

And a moral action, further, must have no motive of self-interest behind it. This is not saying that many interested actions are not natural, proper, and necessary, as the world now is, but only that they do not rise to the dignity of moral actions. How instantly does an action drop to a lower plane in our estimation when we discover that some self-regarding motive lies behind it! Suppose a man is honest, and refrains from imposing on the ignorant who come into his shop, simply because he knows that he will thereby build up a reputation for honesty and increase his chances of business success—do we do more than commend his sagacity; do we think of him as rising into the atmosphere of virtue? Suppose a son devotes himself to his parents, not in the spirit of filial duty, but with the thought that some advantage will come some time to him from doing so—that he will perhaps be assisted in business, or be generously remembered in his parents' will: do not such thoughts in connection with those to whom, if to anyone in this wide world, we should be unselfishly attached, seem a kind of profanation, and recall Shakespeare's words:—

> "Love is not love
> When it is mingled with respects that stand
> Aloof from the entire point"?

Suppose a man becomes a soldier, not out of unselfish attachment to a cause, but for hire—is not our estimate of him all changed? Who that has seen the magnificent creation of Thorwaldsen, the lion carved in the solid rock at Lucerne, in commemoration of the Swiss Guard that fell defending the Tuilleries in 1792, but is pained when the thought comes over him that these men after all had sold themselves for gold, and in aid of a cause against which every instinct and tradition of liberty in Switzerland would seem to have protested? Suppose a man marries, I will not say for so vulgar a motive as money, but only because he is tired and wants a home, and the rest and comfort of it—what is he but a selfish creature after all, and without any part in that experience in which a man, if ever, is taken out of himself, and learns, if never before, the disinterestedness which is the soul of morality?

A moral act is one in which we rise superior to personal considerations; there dare not be mingled with it "respects that stand aloof from the entire point." Morality does not descend to the low plane on which we ordinarily live, and seek to influence us by showing that we should be better off by adhering to it, but takes for granted that we have a higher nature, and appeals to us on the higher, the highest, ground. In the old anti-slavery times calculating, prudent men used to seek to persuade the slave-holders that it would be cheaper to pay wages than to own slaves; that their property would be safer; that even such indispensable luxuries as ice-cream would cost less if the negroes were placed on a fair footing; and that the picturesque house-servants, with their heavy Ethiopian manners, their silent obedience, their hue of bronze and turbaned heads, would find it to their interest to remain on the masters' estates even if they were freed. I know not which to wonder at most—that such foolish appeals should be made with the slightest hope that they would be heeded, or on the other hand that the citadel and seat of the evil were not attacked, and it boldly said, not that the slave-holders were not as far-sighted and business-like as they might be, but that they were committing a wrong. There are some matters where it seems not only unmoral, but almost immoral, to appeal to any but the highest motives. There are some things sacred in this world. We are told that Jesus made a scourge of small cords and drove the money-changers out of the Temple, saying, "Make not my father's house a house of merchandise!" I have almost a similar indignation when I hear the cause of human rights, the cause of charity, treated from any other than the highest standpoint. These subjects ought to lift us immediately to their level. I

heard a man not long ago advocate more systematic and effective charity, because, forsooth, if we thus took care of the poor we should have less need to fear the spread of socialism. It was not man then—man in want, man in sore distress—that we were to consider, but this, that our property become secure against the attacks of socialism! Fie on it, making merchandise thus of charity! But he who urges the cause of humanity on any other grounds than the highest respects not the humanity of those who are in need, nor the humanity in us, and treats us as if we had no higher nature, and could not transcend these considerations about the security and safety of our property.

"Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

Yes, man can rise above himself; and in this higher life, animated by more than personal affections and aspirations, is his home. There he first knows himself; it is, as it were, his native element, as the stainless azure is that of the king of birds.

Nor for considerations of comfort and personal happiness in another world does man need to be concerned. I hear it said that we must believe in a future world, whether there is one or not, to preserve us in paths of virtue here. I reject the imputation on human nature. The fault with many Churches is not that they are too religious, but that they are not religious enough; that they do not recognise the divine element in man—that they do not appeal to it nor pay it reverence. What were the gain, moreover, if men were made "moral" under the influence of the hopes and fears of another world? They would be no better; whatever outward requirements of morality they might be led to comply with, they would not be really moral, the first step towards which is only gained by a renunciation of fears and hopes of any kind, and yielding without questioning or concern to the voice of duty; they would still be their old selfish selves, and immortality in their case would be only a prolongation of such a type of existence. What claims could such people have to such a destiny, what good could be served, what higher purpose of the universe worked out, by granting them a new lease of life? How pitiable is the view of a great Christian authority, Paley, that prudence and duty differ only in that in the one case we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world, and, in the other, also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come! How fittingly does he in proposing such a view omit all moral declamation, as he calls it, about the dignity and capacity of our nature, the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our constitution,[1] since in truth, according to him and the style of many Christian preachers, there is no dignity or divine capacity in our nature, and no difference between the animal and the man, save that man has a spy-glass, and the animal only his eyes to see what is for his selfish interests. In how striking a contrast is the strain of another Christian, Saint Francis Xavier, who passionately exclaims:—

"Thou, O my Jesus! thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace,
And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
E'en death itself—and all for one
Who was thine enemy!

"Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Shall I not love thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward—
But as thyself hast loved me,
O everlasting Lord!"

And of Saint Theresa it is said that she wished to have a torch in her right hand and a vessel of water in her left, that with the one she might burn up the glories of heaven, and with the other extinguish the flames of hell, that men might learn to serve God from love

[1] *Moral Philosophy*, book i., chap. vi.

alone. What a noble outburst! what a sublime impatience with the low views of man and religion that were current in her time—that are current, alas, still! What an assertion of the moral nature, as that in us by reason of which we can transcend all personal hopes and fears, and serve the highest from love alone! How near does it come to Emerson's bold summons, "to turn our back on heaven," and how is the spirit of it reflected to us in Matthew Arnold's lines:—

"Hath man no second life? *Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in heaven our sin to see?
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"

The glow of moral health is in such lines; let us take them and be thankful for them, from whatever source they come.

Still further, and perhaps only bringing out clearly what has already been implied, a moral act must be done on principle. If I merely give way to a charitable impulse, and charity is no principle with me, my act is only an impulsive, not a moral, one. If I am truthful with a friend, and deceitful towards another who is not a friend, even my truthfulness with my friend has no moral value. To do according to my inclination—that is not morality. Morality is acting according to a rule, or (what is the same) a principle. It is bringing all my chance inclinations, all my natural impulses that look in this way or that, into conformity with the rule—putting thus order and steadfastness and reliability into my life. Of how many persons is it not said that, if you find them at the proper moment, they will do the right thing! But the right thing is for always; as it does not depend on our moods for its rightness, so it ought not for its realisation in action. The truly moral man is simply he who says it shall not; to whom the right is a constant, an abiding, rule. I see not any way of escape from a universal consecration to duty—I mean to all that is right. Most of us live broken, fragmentary lives; we have our fits and starts of goodness—they do not come to stay; and when we do one thing that is good, we leave another undone. "Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire" —how true is that of many men! How little of wholeness, of consistency, of unity, is there in our conduct! Henry Clay, one of the kindliest of men, open on almost every side to the gentlest impulses, could yet sacrifice his convictions and the welfare of millions, as Wendell Phillips remarks, to his ambition. Daniel Webster, with a great intellect, and with a sense for the heroic and sublime too, could make his seventh of March speech, and sell his intellectual integrity for a price, which, thank fortune, he never got. Yet, as there is no reason why we should be just which does not hold at all times, or why we should be true which does not hold in face of all temptations, or humane which does not hold in reference to all persons whom we meet, so there is no reason why we should be just which is not equally good for being true, and none for being true which is not equally for being humane. There is no reason for one virtue which does not hold for all virtue; not this or that, but all good is commanded to us. I suppose a person only does a genuinely moral act when he does it not because it happens to be justice or truth or any particular form of duty, but because it is duty, and so with the implication that he would do all duty. A moral act has thus, in strict truth, a universal or infinite significance, and he who performs it has a worth to which no limits can be assigned. It is as if there were some mysterious forms of matter that could be crystal or plant, or flower or tree, or sun or star, anything in the whole material universe; for it is my proud faith in man that, hardened, stiffened, settled as he often may seem to be in this or that type or habit of life, he can become anything that is good; that he is at heart plastic, and not cast

in any inevitable mould; that there are no unapproachable heights outside of and beyond him; that hero, saint, martyr, if need be, he can become.

We often hear, and I am sorry to say from religious teachers particularly, slighting and contemptuous words about morality; but, if what I have said is true, it is far from being a light or trifling or petty thing to perform a genuinely moral action. The dignity of man lies in his capacity for such action; for such action means that man need not follow the crowd, that his thoughts can determine him, that he can freely will the good, that he can be absolutely unselfish in so doing, that he can take captive his wandering desires and impulses, and reflect the pure heaven of principle in his life. And this were, it seems to me, to be a man; this were to be lifted above anxieties, to be no longer the slave of fears or hopes. The only hope could be to be more truly this; the only fear to fall from such a thought and such an aim, and become caught and entangled in any of the lower concerns that are so easy, so natural, and tempting to men.

There is an ideal aim for every child of man. It is not in anything outside of ourselves; it is not to please some supernatural being in the skies; it is not to follow some far-away historical figure in the past. It is closer to us than this; it is in our own heart; it is given to us in our very nature as moral beings. There is nothing higher than to perform a moral action; there is nothing in which the full idea and significance of our being comes so to expression as in that. It is the victory of the divine in us, of a part of those elemental forces which in the wide ages of the past have been turning chaos into order, and covering darkness with light. Every moral action we perform is a new star in the inner firmament; and I sometimes think that, once gathered out of the unformed nebula of our wishes and aspirations, these stars will in some sense shine for ever. I sometimes even dare to think that, if the stars of heaven should fall, these would not; since the stars of heaven would only fall if something more perfect were to take their place, and anything more perfect than a moral action there cannot be. It could grow more perfect only in itself—only by becoming clearer, fuller, ampler, more divinely radiant, not by being resolved and changed into anything else. For a moral action is not most truly any outward deed, or any single partial act of the will within; all so-called moral actions are after all parts of one action, and that is the total purpose of the soul, the action of the life. Notwithstanding all trifling variations, we are moving in one direction or another. No single good thing we do counts save as it is part of a purpose which sweeps on beyond it; and no purpose is adequate which does not cover, in thought at least, the whole life and all its possible future. The star which we are to set in the firmament is the total act of our life; after a time we may cease to see it, but if there is any worth, any foreshadowings of a perfect beauty in it, it will go on. Nothing is so treacherous as memory; nothing hangs by so light a thread as personality—the consciousness that I am the same as I was twenty-five years ago; the consciousness, which some suppose they will have in another life, that they are the same persons as they were here. It is all an uncertain prop. Death ought to bar and teach us the vanity of these personal cravings; but, heedless creatures that we are, we fill up those endless horizons of the future with the images of our personal selves, and deem the goodness we have won, the purity we have gained, and the unselfishness that has triumphed in us too shadowy to stand of themselves without the "I" to support them. Yet which, O Man, is shadowy—the "I" or the good? Only the good in us is worthy to survive, and that will.

IV.

IS THERE A HIGHER LAW?

We are constantly pronouncing judgments upon the worth of actions. Some satisfy us, and others do not; some are right, and some are wrong. We do not mean by this that they are, or are not, of advantage to us personally—the satisfaction we demand is in view of a standard quite apart from our personal interests. We have at heart certain ideals of conduct which we like to see reflected in the actions of men about us. Whether a falsehood or any wrong done to another affects us or not, we may feel nonetheless that it is wrong, that it should not have been. We may understand the train of circumstances which led to the act; we may have a tinge of sympathy for the doer softening our condemnation of what he has done; but it is wrong, nevertheless, and we know that we should go too far with our sympathy if it led us to forget this. We may be mistaken in our judgments about particular cases; motives change the character of acts, and we do not always know the motives. We only know that, if there are such and such motives, the act is morally right or wrong; but, supposing them to exist, we pronounce confidently on its moral character. The right is what should be; it is an idea having this altogether peculiar relation to the fact. Even if our circumstances should change, and our wishes come somehow to be gratified or our personal interests served by the wrong being done, it would be wrong nonetheless, and we should, in a real moment, condemn ourselves for desiring it. The right is, indeed, independent of our wishes or our interests. In accordance with these we can only say that we should *like* to have something be; we cannot say it ought to be: we can only say *that*, as we rise into a higher atmosphere, as we transcend personal considerations, as we speak from the standpoint of reason.

The right is also independent of the wishes or personal interests of another. Right does not mean giving up my wishes to your wishes, or sacrificing my personal advantage to your personal advantage. Your wishes must be right, must conform with an impersonal standard — your personal advantage must be in harmony with the universal advantage, else I cannot yield to it. Morality is not sympathy: in many cases it may be that I ought to deny another as well as myself. Sympathy is simply a natural instinct, better, indeed, and nobler than selfishness, but liable to lead us astray as truly as selfishness unless guided and controlled by moral considerations. Sympathy is personal; morality is impersonal. Even if it is your dearest friend who has done a wrong, it is nonetheless wrong, and gravity must mingle with your tenderness in thinking of it.

The right and wrong, we feel further, are independent of our changing opinions about them. When our eyes are open, we see the sun; when they are closed, it is lost to us; should we become blind, it would be lost to us for ever. In such a case vain would be any one's effort to prove to us that it still shone, if we were obstinate, and insisted on the authority of present experience alone to prove that it did; but, for all that, it would still be there, and, if we were reasonable and would call to mind our former experience, we might be assured of it. So there are moments in our moral experience which outweigh in authority all others. In such calm,

clear moments we know, we say, that we see the truth; at other times, overborne by our passions or our prejudices, overawed by the contrary customs and opinions of men, we may almost be aware that we are losing sight of it, but it is there all the same. If one asks why we do not always see it if it is always there, the answer is that we do not always try to see it, our concern being often rather to justify our passions and our prejudices. If one asks why the customs and opinions of men have often been so various and contradictory, I answer that these customs and opinions have been, in the main, formed by other than rational considerations. Men have rarely sought, with a single eye, for the right and wrong of things; their customs and opinions have at best simply a little morality mixed with them. The time is yet to come when men, divesting themselves as best they may of personal considerations, shall seek to reflect in their thought the pure ideals of morality. Moral culture—I mean in general the disinterested attempt to fashion human life after the ideals of morality—is in its veriest infancy; it is as science was before the birth of a Bacon or a Darwin. Men had not sought the truth; they studied nature, if they studied it at all, to confirm certain old theories of cosmogony or theology. Where can you find now the disinterested student of morality—patient, painstaking, laborious, scrupulous, ridding himself of attachment to mere custom and opinion, and seeking only for the perfect right? When such students arise, and men become as eager to explore the world of moral ideas as they are now to explore the realms of nature, there will gradually arise, I believe, an increasing agreement as to moral conceptions, as there is now coming to be an increasing agreement among disinterested observers as to scientific fact. The opinions of men are still various as to matters of science; but we do not doubt that some opinions are true though others are false, for the test of truth is conformity to fact—and fact is not various, but one. Even though we do not know what opinions are true and what are false, we know that such a thing as truth or falsehood exists, and that it is for us to find them out in each particular case. So I grant that as to many things we may not know clearly the right and the wrong; there may be various and contradictory opinions about them; and yet we may feel that there is a right and a wrong, and that it is for us to find them out in each particular case. No more than the facts of nature are the ideals of morality dependent on our opinion of them; there is a true, a best, a wholly right way of doing everything. It is not for us to make this, to try to create it; we cannot, indeed, make it or create it, any more than we can the sun in the heavens; we have simply to discover it.

Granted, however, that there is a right independent of our changing wishes and opinions, how, it may be asked, can the right be spoken of as a law? Laws we know of in nature, or in connection with the State. Is not the right, it may be asked, simply an idea of our minds? But if we reflect a moment, we shall realise that it enters into the very notion of right to be a law. The good and the right are simply *what should be*; they are nothing of themselves; they have no meaning or reality, save as ideals of action. They have a sovereign relation to action—they are laws of action; and I question if they are not more truly laws than any of the State, or even of physical nature. The laws of the State are not really laws unless they are good laws; they do not bind us. An immoral law, like the Fugitive-Slave Law, may be broken every day; it may be affirmed by the judge and commanded by the commonwealth, and yet be no law at all. That only is a law which binds me, to which I must yield allegiance if I am to preserve my honour as a rational being. It may be questioned whether the laws of nature—the law of gravitation, for example, the law of

cohesion, the law of chemical affinity—are properly called laws at all; they are simply statements of facts—regular, constant, invariable, if you please, but only facts—and a law is properly a prescription of what facts ought to be. We may wholly deceive ourselves if we think of the law of gravitation as anything outside of the facts themselves, as something which, as we say in common parlance, the facts obey; the law may be but a statement of the facts, simply summing them up in a convenient way. It might be added that a law of morals is more truly a law than the so-called laws of health or laws of business. A law of health means that if we want a perfect physical condition we must live in a certain way, we must maintain certain habits; but suppose we do not aspire to such a perfect condition, what do the laws of health signify? The laws of business mean that there are certain essential conditions of business success; but if we are not ambitious in that direction, or if we do not enter upon a business career at all, what do these laws of business signify? The laws of health and the laws of business merely declare that, if we desire certain ends, we must use certain means; but, so far as their obligation upon us goes, all depends upon whether we desire the ends. If I wish to go to Europe, I must cross the ocean; it is the only possible way of getting there—it might be called the law of getting there; but the law means nothing if I do not wish to go. A law of morals is totally different from this. It signifies not only that there are certain means we must take to achieve our ends, but that there are certain ends binding upon us which we must choose if we are to maintain our character as rational beings. The laws of morals are sometimes sought to be explained by showing that they point the way which one must take to secure the general welfare; if one chooses the general welfare as his end in life, he must act according to these laws, for experience has proved that they and they alone conduce to the general welfare. But suppose that one says, "I do not choose the general welfare"—if morality means nothing more than the explanation just given, what possible obligation has it upon him?

In fact, morality must mean more, or it is nothing at all—no more than the law of crossing the ocean. Morality rises above our wishes and wants just as truly in the determination of our ends as of the means by which we must reach them. Morality is nothing but reason uttering itself; and there are rational ends just as truly as there are rational means of attaining them. If a man does not choose the general welfare, the laws of morality are nonetheless binding upon him. Morality says: You ought to choose the general welfare. It, indeed, covers all our voluntary action; it is in nowise dependent upon what we do or what we fail to do; it is simply an ideal for doing. It is co-extensive with the whole of our active life; not an act, nor a wish, nor a want, nor a thought, nor a judgment, nor any utterance but may be confronted with the question: Is it in harmony with the standard of right, which is sovereign over all?

Thus is a higher law unfolded to us in the very nature of morality; it is given to us in our very constitution as rational beings. We call it a higher law because it is independent of the standard to which men ordinarily pay respect. How powerful is custom! how often does it almost lull to sleep the voice of conscience! Yet the question may always be raised, Are the customs right; do they conform to the requirements of the law that is above them? How easy it is to glide along with the current of popular sentiment, to think and love and hate as people about us do! Yet any popular sentiment can be brought before a higher bar; and from that bar a judgment will go out as to whether such sentiment has a right to be and we have a right to follow it, or whether it is our duty to seek to reform it. The higher law is independent of the requirements

of statutes. We can only say, fortunate are the statutes if they reflect the higher law, and so hold up an ideal for the people; for if they do not, if they contradict the higher law, it and not they are to be obeyed. The whole meaning of ethics is in the sense of an invisible authority; to bow to custom, to public opinion, or to law, is moral idolatry.

Whence comes the authority of this law that is within and over us? The ordinary answers seem to me here entirely to fail. Many of our particular duties may have their sanction in that they tend to the general welfare. But what is the sanction for the supreme duty of seeking the general welfare? Who can give a reason for this? The sources of the authority of the laws of the statute book in our democratic communities are in the will of the people. Civil governments, we say, derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. But there is no practical consent on the part of men generally to the supremacy of the laws of morality. The practical consent of most men is to the law of individual self-interest; but if men should consent to the laws of morality, they would, if they were candid, consent to them with the feeling that those laws had an inherent right to rule, and the question would still remain, Whence comes this right? Plainly, morality—the higher law—does not rest on our consent to it, nor is the right determined by a majority or any kind of vote. It is there, commanding us whether we consent to it or not; our business is to give our allegiance to it as a sovereign whom we have not placed upon, and cannot displace from, his throne. Ethics and politics are distinct in their methods of operation. The last basis for popular sovereignty itself is not that the people have a right to do as they please, but that the *people* are more likely to rule rightly than any *one man or class of men is.* The ultimate authority of the laws of the people, just as truly as those of any king or lord, rests on their conformity to a higher standard of justice and of right. Homer speaks of—

"That worst of tyrants, an usurping crowd."[1]

Socrates knew that he was very much hated by many persons; that, if condemned, it would be owing to the malice and the slander of the multitude. Democracy does not mean any ceasing of the responsibility of the educated and the intelligent, but is only a new opportunity for them, a new call upon them to spread their light and intelligence among the people. It is the ideal destiny of every human being to rule himself; this truth is the moral basis of democracy; but the rule of one's self must be in accordance with the thought of the highest and the best.

As little are the sanctions of the higher law to be found in the Bible. It would be idle to speak of this among serious-minded persons, were not a contrary opinion so commonly expressed in the community. "We should do right because the Bible commands us": how often do we hear this expression among Christian people! I read only the other day of a teacher in one of our theological seminaries, who said he thought that conscience could not vary from the Bible—the consciousness of right being, as he declared, derived from the Bible. Yet, if this practical atheism, this absence of living moral conviction, masking itself under the guise of reverence for a book—if this is in the teaching of the leaders of our Churches, what have we reason to believe is the mental condition of the people themselves? The Bible belongs to the sacred literature of the world; but it does so belong because it *reflects* the moral ideals and aspirations of man, not because it has created them. There are other Bibles than that containing the Hebrew and Christian scriptures: every line that utters a thought of the good and the just is a sacred line; and out of the heart of man, out of his prophetic soul, dreaming on things to

[1] *Iliad*, ii. 204.

come, will yet issue grander Bibles and more sacred literatures than any the past has known.

More charity must we have for the view that the authority of the right is in some way connected with God. God is sometimes only a name for the invisible right that is within and over us. When Socrates says, "Athenians, I love and cherish you, but I shall obey the gods rather than you";[1] when Peter and the Apostles answered the high-priest and his council, "We must obey God rather than men";[2] when Wendell Phillips took his stand with the right, as "that absolute essence of things which lives in the sight of the Eternal and Infinite";[3] when Antigone set the unwritten, immovable laws of the gods[4] above the proclamation of the king of Thebes, and paid the last honours to her brother's corpse despite that proclamation; they, each and all, had essentially in mind the highest thought in man, and they felt that it was there to rule, that they were to brave anything rather than be untrue to it. "God" is often, I suppose, simply a name for that supreme sanctity which is in every man's breast, would he but become aware of it. Socrates says: "Wherever any one stations himself because he thinks it right to be there, or is stationed by his commander, there I think he ought to remain and face danger, taking into account neither death nor anything else in comparison with disgrace."[5] The right, indeed, binds him; it holds him as by a charm to the spot where he is. The obligation to stay there is ultimate; we can only say it exists in the reason and nature of things. And if by the term "God" was meant simply the reason and nature of things, it might perhaps be freely used; but the word means something else to most persons. If one should speak of the reason and nature of things to many, they would not understand him; if, instead, he should use the word "God," they would think they did. But in truth they might not understand him any better in the one case than in the other, for they would think that he meant by "God" what they mean by it; and as they use the term it is, perhaps, to him *Aberglaube* (extra-belief). To them the Deity is a person; and what perhaps was once a metaphor, a figure of speech, borrowed from the shining sky above, they have hardened into a dogma; and they think that the laws of morality are laws because he commands them, and we are to obey them out of reverence for him. But, in truth, if the Deity is something thus additional to morality, if he is a person giving commands in the literal sense, he gives no authority to his commands, but rather they give authority to him. No human or divine will can make anything right that is not of itself right. If this were possible, it would follow that, if that will commanded what was wrong, it would cease to be wrong; and hence there would be a total subversion of moral distinctions. The noblest Christian theologians have held to a right independent of the will of God, and made their best claims for a worship of the divine will in that it perfectly accords with that right. Robert Browning says:—

"......justice, good, and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right mis-
named."[1]

If this is true, the last answer to the question as to the sources of the authority of the higher law fails as truly as the first. In fact, there is no answer; there are no sources for that supreme authority. We cannot go beyond the law of right; God is not more ultimate; human reason is but that in us which perceives it. It indeed has no origin; its source is not in the heavens or the earth; it is a final, irrevocable, uncreated law—I might say, the everlasting adamant on which the

[1] *Apology*, § 29. [2] Acts, v. 29.
[3] *Speeches*, p. 272. [4] *Antigone*, 455.
[5] *Apology*, § 28.

[1] *Christmas Eve*, xvii.

moral universe is built. It is the same as the old Stoic philosophers called the Law of Nature, contrasting, as it did, in so many ways with the law of nations; the same as the Roman lawyers thought of as an ideal after which to re-fashion the great mass of traditional Roman law. It is the same as that which in the eyes of our forefathers gave the basis for the natural and inalienable rights of man. It is the same as prompted the exclamation of Sophocles, "Oh that my lot might lead me in the path of holy innocence of thought and deed, the path which august laws ordain; laws which in the highest heaven had their birth, neither did the race of mortal man beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep; the power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old!"[1] It is the same as that of which Cicero said that we can take nothing from it, change nothing, abrogate nothing; that neither the Senate nor the people have a right to free us from it. It is the same as Rousseau had in mind when he said that the eternal laws of nature and of order are still in being, and supply the place of positive laws in the eye of the man of discernment;[2] as Voltaire, when he said that the sentiment of justice is so natural, so universally felt by mankind, that it seems to be independent of all law, all party, all religion. The higher law is that, indeed, which gives mankind its goal; it is the foundation of States; it is the basis for all the worth and dignity of human life.

That this law is no mere fancy, but a reality and a power in human history, is shown in this—that nothing which is not in accordance with it can last. I have not defined this law; I have taken for granted that we all have some sense of it. Its practical meaning may be discovered in the different virtues which we all have as ideals in our minds.

[1] *Œdipus Tyrannus*, 863 ff.
[2] *Emile*.

Precise scientific statements are not always desirable, even if they are possible, in treating of so great a theme. It satisfies me in a general way to say that the higher law is that which commands us to seek the universal good. Another statement might be that every man has the ends of a man, and is hence to be treated as sacred and inviolable. My point now is, that if we do not so respect every man, we offend the higher law; and if there are many in a community who have a similar disregard, the fate of that community is sealed. Things are so ordered that righteousness alone is stability and lasting order and permanent peace. We did not make this so, and we cannot change it; it is a part of the nature of things, which overrides our will and makes light of our intentions; it signifies that we are in other, stronger hands than our own. The prophets of the old time were simply those who took the side of the higher law, denounced the wickedness and the corruption that they saw about them, and prophesied the disaster and ruin that would inevitably follow. Greek tragedy is full of this thought; it is religious, even as the prophecies of the Old Testament are. The higher laws are not dead, stupid, indifferent things, but quick and alive, and know, so to speak, when they are offended. You cannot escape the consequences of any wrong you commit; if you do not suffer, society will suffer, your children will suffer: somehow the wrong must be expiated. There is a moral order in the world, holding up to us what we should do, and avenging itself upon us if we do not do it. History is but an impressive lesson of this. The Greeks spoke of the Furies that followed, and would sooner or later overtake, the guilty man; the Hebrews spoke of the wrath of the Eternal against the doers of wickedness. These metaphors, these figures of speech, are not more, but less, than the fact. The injured majesty of justice will avenge itself. "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more;

but the righteous is an everlasting foundation."[1]

Time may be necessary for the proving of this. Our indignation at wrong and injustice often fails to have immediate satisfaction; but time brings it round to us—if not to us, then to those who inherit the sense of indignation from us. For the spectacle of righteous retribution is not made for our personal satisfaction, it works itself out on its own account; happy are we, we may say, if we are privileged to see the consummation, but the consummation will come whether we see it or not. The end and issue of present wrongs are in the future—they are hid from our eyes; but the end and issue of past wrongs are plain before us. What has become of Assyria, of Babylon, those mighty empires that at their height of sway felt a boding sense come on—a sense that their huge frames were not constructed right—

"And drooped, and slowly died upon their throne."[2]

They rested on violence; they were permeated with immorality; they were doomed to fall. What has become of Greece, whom her art and her literature and her philosophy could not save?—Greece, of whom Matthew Arnold says that every educated man must love her?—Greece, who was the lifter-up to the nations of the banner of art and science, and yet, brilliant as she was, perished for lack of attention enough to conduct—for want of conduct, steadiness, character.[3] What has become of Rome, stretching her empire so grandly as she did over the Western world, whom her Ciceros and Antonines, and schools of great jurists, failed to save? Gone down because of luxury, because of sensuality, because of the idleness of the higher classes and the slavery of the lower; because of the contempt of human beings, because of great estates, because of inequality. What was the French revolution—I mean the horrors and the bloodshed of it, that which made it, as someone has said, "a truth clad in hell-fire"—what was it but a righteous judgment upon a corrupt Church, a corrupt monarchy, a corrupt society—a penalty visited upon France by the offended justice of things?

What was the Civil War in America but the natural and unescapable result of a wrong that was permitted to fester in the vitals of the nation, and came near to consuming it away? The statesmen before the war thought to compromise with the wrong; they hid themselves under the forms of law and the Constitution. But the compromises and the wrongs permitted by the Constitution were part causes of the war; the war was a judgment on the country for permitting such compromises, for having such a Constitution. Wendell Phillips used to say that the sentiment of justice was something "against which no throne is potent enough to stand, no constitution sacred enough to endure"; and he used to charge his hearers: "Remember this when you go to an anti-slavery gathering in a schoolhouse, and know that weighed against its solemn purpose, its terrible resolution, its earnest thought, Webster himself, and all huckstering statesmen in the opposite scale, shall kick the beam."[1] The prophecy has come true—the huckstering statesmen have kicked the beam, and now no man wants to have it known that he or his father had any sympathy with those statesmen. "How shall a feeble minority," cried Phillips, "without weight or influence in the country, with no jury of millions to appeal to, denounced, vilified, and contemned—how shall we make way against the overwhelming weight of some colossal reputation, if we do not turn from the idolatrous present and appeal to the human race? Saying to your idols of to-day, 'Here we are, defeated; but we will write our judgment with the iron pen of a century

[1] *Proverbs*, x. 25.
[2] Matthew Arnold: Poems.
[3] *Ibid.*, *Literature and Dogma.*

[1] *Speeches*, p. 50.

to come, and it shall never be forgotten, if we can help it, that you were false in your generation to the claims of the slave.'"[1] Well, brave soul, it will never be forgotten; your appeal to the human race is already heard; you were not defeated; the reputation which was so colossal in your day weighs very lightly upon us now, and the man who could speak contemptuously of the higher law —"some higher law," Webster said, "something existing somewhere between here and the third heaven; I do not know where"—he lives in our national history in no small measure to be excused and apologised for.

What are the outrages now and then cropping out in Ireland, the assassinations now and then taking place in Russia, but the furies of an avenging justice? Sydney Smith said that at the mention of Ireland "the English seem to bid adieu to common-sense, and to act with the barbarity of tyrants and the fatuity of idiots"; Byron called England's union with Ireland "the union of the shark with his prey"; Burke affirmed that Ireland "only got justice from England when demanded at the sword's point"; and Gladstone himself confessed that England never conceded anything "except when moved to do so by fear."[2] If this is true, is there not a call for avenging furies? And of Russia, what description is better than that made long ago, and repeated by Phillips—"a despotism tempered by assassination"? Is Nihilism anything more than, as Phillips declared, "the last weapon of victims, choked and manacled beyond all other resistance"? "God means," Phillips continued, and that is only saying that justice demands, "that unjust power be insecure; and every move of the giant prostrate in chains, whether it be to lift a single dagger or stir a city's revolt, is a lesson in justice."

[1] *Speeches*, p. 114.
[2] See Wendell Phillips's *The Scholar in the Republic*, from which I have taken these quotations.

All the unrest, all the disorder, all the strikes and outbreaks in our country, are simply proofs that the equilibrium of justice is not reached. Men are for peace, when the conditions of peace do not exist. Let men do justice, let the State witness for it, let every shop and factory and means of intercourse and transportation be a scene of it, and we shall have peace fast enough. When "order reigns in Warsaw" there is spiritual death. Disorder, confusion, uprisings, are signs of spiritual life, proofs that there are thoughts stirring in the hearts of men, that they will not be content till they have a chance to become something like what they ought to be. Justice will not let us have rest till we have satisfied her claims; society, as another ideal voice in American history (Channing) has said, will be shaken, and deserves to be shaken, till its solemn debt to the poor and ignorant is paid. So does the higher law make itself known, not only directly to the conscience, but in the course and development of human history, and in the unrest and disquiet of to-day.

The higher law is the solution of our social problems. It was but one minor political application of it—that to slavery. There is demanded an application wherever man is dishonoured, whether civilly free or not. The rule applies everywhere, Treat each man with whom you are in contact as having the ends of a man, and as far as in you lies, help him to realise those ends. What are the ends of man? I need not attempt any formal enumeration. What are the things that we deem suitable and proper for ourselves? What is good for us, what is dear to us, is likely to be good for others. May we not suppose that others would like a living income, a decent home, some leisure for thought, for the culture of the higher part of their nature? If I am told that in some cases they do not care for these things, that they have no ambition for more than a hand-to-mouth existence, that they live a stupid,

brutalised life, and are content with it, must we not ask, as Matthew Arnold said Englishmen must when they think of the outpourings of Irish Catholic resentment upon themselves, Whose fault is it?[1] Is it not society's fault, in part, that these men have had to live a hand-to-mouth existence, and to become content with it?—because, forsooth, it was almost vain for them when left to themselves to strive for more; and they, as a rule, have been left to themselves. Have we the heart, when we think of this, to talk so glibly of their brutalised life? They will go on living so, it is to be feared, till we become brothers to them, till we carry to them, and keep ever in ourselves, the thought of what they are ideally called to be. If no law of business, no law of the State, commands this, shall we not say that the higher law commands it—that law which contemplates us all as brothers, and gives us our duty as grounded in that relation, and knows of no limits to our duty save those inhering in a universal honour and love? If this is our true relation; if, as Marcus Aurelius said,[2] we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids; if it is contrary to nature to be angry with our kinsmen, or to hate them, or to be indifferent to them, then does so much that we waste on what is superfluous belong to us to waste; does so much of the time that we devote to our selfish interests belong to ourselves; is there not a call for humanity overleaping all conventional limits, a humanity that shall assert practically in our daily lives our brotherhood with the poorest and the least? The higher law is, in truth, still in advance of, and above, the ordinary practice and ordinary thoughts of men. Men do not dream of the duties that really belong to them; they are content with the average standards of morality about them. They would not countenance slavery, oh no! but that which made slavery wrong makes anything wrong which hinders or makes impossible a free progress of every individual to what is highest and best. The higher law is inconsistent with the customary law of wages; the higher law is inconsistent with the subjection of women, with all that view of her as a mere attendant and helpmeet for man; it is inconsistent with any home where one person exists to serve and another to be served; it calls for a universal application of the rule of respect and honour and love.

For the higher law is not a beautiful speculation to indulge in; it calls for a higher life. If we win a thought in advance of the common practice of the day, it is a summons to us to lift our life to a new level, and contribute so much to the onward movement of the world. If we are but vaguely ill at ease, as we think of the present condition of society, it may be that thereby the spirit of progress marks us out and gives us the first presentiments of the work it has for us to do. Discontent because our personal wants and wishes are not gratified may be far from noble; but discontent with ourselves and our lives in view of the suggestions of an idea that calls us up higher—there is something almost sacred about that. Every stirring of this discontent signifies that we are not really at home in the world as it is; that in some sense we have a better country, and belong to another order of things. There are those who tell us it will not do to have our ideals too high; that this would unfit us for life as it is. They forget that it is not necessarily our place to accept life as it is—that our duty may be to help to re-make it. It is sometimes said, with reference to our public life, that to act with entire honesty and self-respect one needs always to live in a pure atmosphere, and it is added that the atmosphere of politics is impure. Is one, then, to accept his atmosphere as if it were something given to him, and not to know that he may be himself a factor in creating it? A man with a too keen sense of rectitude, says Herbert

[1] *God and the Bible*, p. 45.
[2] *Meditations*, ii. 1.

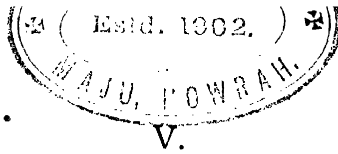
Spencer, a too elevated standard of conduct, might find life intolerable and impossible.[1] Impossible? No, unless in those rare times when for high reasons it were better not to live. Intolerable? Yes; and the sense that it was so would prompt to the necessary efforts to make life tolerable. Intolerable wrongs?—then we will overthrow them. Intolerable circumstances? — then we will revolt against them.

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> To gain or lose it all."[2]

But with a thought of some higher good, I, in real truth, believe that we cannot lose or fail. The world is meant to go that way—it is in its make and nature to do so; and every effort, every thought, is simply a new beginning, a new impulse to that onward movement. The only thing that fails in this world is wrong—fails, though it takes men and nations with it, and involves them in ruin. The good is that which preserves and keeps alive. I almost fancy at times that, if a perfectly just society should ever come to be, it would never cease; that the elements would wax kind for it; that the earth would put off its day of final destruction to do it honour; or if that dire event should ever come, that the divine society would then be transported to some happy isles, "ever fertile, clear in atmosphere, and unvexed with storms," and be dowered with immortality. But, whether or no, we belong to such a society. The higher law that sounds within us is sign that we belong to another state than that in which we live, to a divine commonwealth; and a man is to remember this higher citizenship as he walks the streets of his earthly city—it is to keep him erect while he walks there, and from aught that is unbecoming or mean or common. Lying is not the law of that ideal commonwealth, and it is not for him to lie; honour is before gain there, and his first thought should be to keep himself spotless here; selfishness is not neatly matched with selfishness there, and it is for him to live in an element of disinterested love now. The only thing he may have now that he will find no room for there is indignation at and resistance to wrong; and even these cannot become settled habits with him, for they exist only to the end of removing all wrong; and when that time shall come, should he ever see it, delight and joy and thanksgiving will take the place of all other emotions. To act now, not according to our poor human statutes and conventions, but according to the higher perfect law that we know only within our own breast; to live here as the citizen of an ideal kingdom—that, it seems to me, were the proudest distinction a man could crave. That kingdom is not yet; only the thought and the law of it are in us, and the kingdom is to be. We are to make that kingdom, and we know of its possibilities nowhere else than here. A great creative responsibility rests upon mankind and upon us for our measure of the task. To be as good as our fathers, said Phillips, we must be better. The duties of their day were new to them; let it not surprise us if there are duties for us and the future that have never dawned on mankind before. Duty is like the truth—we are ever discovering it. The principles, the great laws, may be old; their applications, their practical meaning in our lives, are ever new.

> "New occasions teach new duties,
> Time makes ancient good uncouth;
> They must upward, still, and onward,
> Who would keep abreast of truth!"[1]
>
> J. R. Lowell.

[1] *Education*, p. 169.
[2] Marquis of Montrose (1612–1650).



V.

MORALITY AS A RELIGION[1]

My subject to-day may strike one as strange. The ordinary idea is that morality and religion are distinct things—and yet I presume to speak of morality as a religion! Some may think me guilty of confusion; and the reproach may come from both sides, from those who believe in morality but do not want it mixed up with religion, and from those who take their stand with religion and conceive morality tame and commonplace and insufficient compared with it. And yet the mingling and blending of the two is just my point of view—yes, I think I may say our point of view; for, in our own understanding of the term, we are a religious Society, not ethical and religious, but a Society whose religion is ethics.

I grant that the common ideas are not without a basis of fact, that there may be a morality without religion, and that there may be religion quite distinct and apart from morality—yes, that on both sides this has been more often the case than not; but I hold that each is an imperfect, inadequate, and may even be a dangerous thing. I wish to make this clear to-day, and I wish to show first, intellectually and scientifically, how the two may be united, and, secondly, the strong and imperative need that they be united.

Morality originally was simply the customs of a community, the settled ways of acting that men living together naturally fell into. By a natural process the good customs tend to survive, since the bad ones weaken a community and lead to its extinction. So everywhere, given time enough, customary morality tends to become what we may call real morality. And yet this process may be a more or less unconscious one, and good customs, like others, may be followed and obeyed more or less unthinkingly. The morality may still be a thing of routine and habit—a half mechanical thing. This morality may have little or nothing to do with religion. Perhaps a good part of the morality existing in the world to-day is of this instinctive, mechanical sort—it is a second nature to men; it has little or nothing to do with religion.

On the other hand, religion was at the outset little more than an arrangement by which men got the favour or warded off the enmity of the gods. There were friendly and hostile powers in nature—powers that were made into persons—and religion was the reverence and awe which they naturally inspired, the reverent and awe-struck dealing and commerce with them. Hence altars, and sacrifices, and priests, and temples—all means by which the favour of the Divine persons was won. Evidently this had little to do with the ways of men in dealing with one another that are called morality. One might take part in the religious rites of a community and experience the thrill of religious emotion, even if he disregarded the common moral standards—in any case, one's religious life was apart from his moral life. Perhaps this is still so to a great extent. Religion, we know, is commonly regarded as concerned with another realm than that of ethics. Reverence and awe still go out to Divine persons, or perhaps, vaguely,

[1] An address (the conclusion of a series) given before the Society for Ethical Culture of Chicago, at Steinway Hall, November 16th, 1902.

to unknown powers, not to the laws of morality.

And yet what imperfect and inadequate things morality and religion so conceived are! For when the reason once awakes, when men are no longer content to follow in the ruts of custom, when they begin to ask the reason why, they see that only those customs are valid customs or real morality which tend to the community's good, which make it strong and happy; they see too that the community's welfare is dependent on these conditions; that so long as certain things are not done in the community (or by the community) it is in vain to sacrifice to the gods or to pray for their favour. Yes, in time they come to see that, as welfare and happiness are not arbitrary gifts but come naturally, reverence and awe have their real ground and object in the natural order under which we live; that to revere right and justice is the true reverence, and that to have fear and trembling in view of the fact that all not founded on right and justice will perish is the true awe. In other words, morality become conscious, become aware of what it means and involves, seen in its wide, deep ramifications, takes on something of that hue of feeling, something of that solemnity, that of old characterised men's commerce with the gods. Yet in face of a morality that has thus become conscious, rational, full of reverence and religion, how thin and superficial seems the mere unthinking, customary morality that is not touched with the religious spirit at all!

On the other hand, when religion is deepened, when riper thought comes to be connected with it, when it is more clearly seen what the relation of man is to the forces outside of him, how changed becomes its attitude to morality! Religion, as all other activities, is bent on securing a blessing for man. Its prayers, its sacrifices, its worship, are all to this end. For man's welfare was believed to depend on unseen, mysterious powers that peopled the earth, air, and sky; and it was in such ways that they were made friendly. But when man sees that the blessings he craves, the welfare he covets, has other conditions, that the end only tends to be reached when there is a certain type of life among men, when the community has certain laws and is pervaded by a certain spirit—when he sees that even physical forces that sometimes affect human destiny so powerfully do not act arbitrarily, but that everywhere in the world there is recognisable law, then what a change comes over the face of religion! The very ends religion craves lead it to pay respect to the real conditions of life—lead it, too, to study the laws of the physical world; and hence, instead of praying or sacrificing for peace and happiness, men do the things that make for peace and happiness; instead of imploring Apollo or Jahveh or "God" to stop a pestilence, they search out and remove its causes. No longer, then, separate and apart from ethics and science, religion becomes ethical and scientific; it sees that ethics guided by science is its very life and soul—that, as the Hebrew sacred books say, obedience is more than sacrifice, and in wisdom and righteousness lies the way of life. Yet in face of a religion of this sort, palpitating with life and reality, a practical force in the process of man's advancement, how feeble and ineffectual, and even false, seems the old type of religion, that thinks morality an outside or secondary affair, that gives reliances to men that are no reliances at all.

There is, then, no necessary antithesis between religion and morality. It is a mistake to identify religion, as is sometimes done, with a set of views about the universe. It is really a set of feelings, a set of practices. These feelings and practices may, when they take shape, ally themselves with the views of the world that are then dominant—they almost inevitably will. The old Greek religion harmonised with the old Greek philosophy, the early Hebrew religion was interpenetrated with the general ideas about life and the world that were

then current among the Hebrew tribes. And yet why do we call the Greek religion and the Hebrew religion—or, to take a still more different type, the Buddhist religion—alike religions? The beliefs are widely different, yet in every case there is a common recognisable attitude, tone, and character of mind. We never run the risk of confusing a man's religious acts or devotions with anything else. Perhaps his posture reveals what he is doing. Even the look on his countenance may be peculiar. There is an intentness, a reverential manner, a humility, an awe, that are absolutely characteristic, and that a man shows at no other time than when he is in a religious mood. It is the same with the Catholic dropping on adoring knees before the elevated host, and with the Buddhist gazing in homage on a statue of the Buddha, and with the Greek extending his arms to Apollo, and with the savage standing mute before a sacred stone—yes, and with the modern man, bending hushed and subdued, as he thinks of those mighty laws on which the health and safety of the race depend. Religion, I say, is this peculiar feeling, and the peculiar practices and acts that grow out of it. Views of the universe are not religion until they touch this feeling; nor, as matter of fact, is it dependent on any particular views of the universe—it is only necessary that there be something, some fact, some situation, in face of which this deep, peculiar emotion arises.

On the other hand, there is nothing in the nature of morality to hinder it from blending with religion. Morality is unquestionably a way of acting rather than a way of feeling. And often, as I have said, this action has been merely in accordance with custom—instinctive, unthinking. But there is no reason why moral action should not be thinking and alive, no reason why it should not take in the issues that are involved in it, why it should not see that true morality is the way of life and immorality the way of death to men and communities—no reason why men conscious of their responsibilities and of the great issues at stake should not be touched with reverence and awe as they think of these things, should not become hushed and subdued. Morality would then become a religion to men—in the fundamental and indeed universally recognised sense of the term. Just as obviously as the fear or love of a Divine Person can be a religion, as the worship of Apollo or the worship of Jahveh was once a religion, as the imitation of Jesus or of Buddha is a religion, so can morality be a religion to a man. Much that goes by the name of morality in the world could not be so called, for it is a poor surface affair; it has no depth, and it has no height; it stirs nobody, and can stir nobody; it hardly counts in the world save in a negative way. But morality as I can conceive of it, morality as I have tried, and yet well know I am unable, to picture it—morality as conscious, willing, glad subordination to the universal laws of life, morality as lifting one to comradeship with suns and stars because it is faithful as they, morality loving the law of life even more than life, morality ready to die rather than be untrue—that morality may be the very ideal which one may seek all one's life to follow, that may be the supreme law to a man, it may be the supreme passion to a man—down on his knees he may bow before it, as he may before Jesus or before Buddha or any other son of man who has exemplified the ideal or made it any brighter before his eyes.

I think, then, it is plain—the sense in which religion and morality may become one. This is because religion is a general term—it is whatever one holds sacred, whatever one venerates, whatever gives one his supreme rule of life. But what that shall be is another question. Religion itself does not decide it. Religion is not an independent sphere of knowledge. It originates nothing. It is the way we take knowledge or ideas that we otherwise get—whether we view them seriously or no, whether we attend

to them, whether they become momentous in our eyes, whether they become a principle of order or control in our lives. From this point of view, morality (the laws of life) is simply one of the possible objects of religion; there may be others—indeed, other types of religion have been and are more frequent in the world than ethical religion. This is why I speak as I do to-day of "Morality as a Religion"—as if I were making a proposal, something that I am aware will strike many ears strangely. Other types of religion are so common that it is actually imagined that they alone are religion.

And yet I am almost ready to turn the tables and to say that in an enlightened age of the world morality is alone fit to be a religion; that the prevailing types of religion are, or ought to be, outworn; that only so far as they contain the germs of a religion of morality have they any saving salt in them. I am almost ready to take the jealous tone of Dr. Coit and say, on behalf of righteousness, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." For if we are very earnest for human life, if we see it as the frail thing that it is, depending for its happiness, its security, even its existence, on obedience to the laws of life, how can we be supremely concerned about anything but this obedience? What light is worth anything but the light of science in revealing to us those laws, and what is all our activity worth, all our expenditure of energy, if it fails to keep us in the straight and narrow path of obedience to them? Of what use is it to call on the gods?—the real gods, the eternal father- and mother-nature from which we are all born, make themselves known in those laws; if we do not obey, they do not help us, and contentedly allow us and our works to come to nought. Of what use are all sorts of mystical emotions, all sorts of heaven-scaling speculators, all sorts of unearthings of the secrets of heaven and earth, if we have not the emotion requisite to keep us straight in daily life, if we have not an eye for cause and effect here and now, if we have not the secret of happiness and of joy and of peace from day to day? A religion that will teach us how to live, that will hold up clear and high the laws of life and win us to obedience to them—this is the religion the world needs, and it is the only true religion; all others, all that seek to make something else sacred, that make men put their trust in "God" or Christ or the Virgin or the Bible or the Church or its sacraments and rites, are a diverting of man from the real issue; they are the blind leading of the blind; they are a delusion and a snare.

And somewhat in the same way I would meet those who think that in this age we have got beyond the need of religion—that science is well and morality is well, but (to use colloquial language) there is no occasion for getting excited about them. This is overlooking the real nature of the human problem. It rests on what I would call a smooth and easy view of human nature. It forgets the dark facts of weakness, waywardness, and perversity—all that the orthodox doctrine sums up under the name of "sin." There is much illusion in what liberal ministers and writers have said about the divinity of human nature. If man was really born divine, the orthodox doctrine of a "fall" is necessary to account for his present condition. The fact is the divine is the goal of human nature, not its beginning or origin. Man has come from animal origins—and shortsightedness and weakness and capriciousness and animality are natural to him. The higher life is like life itself on the animal plane—it is the fruit of effort and struggle; what does not will to live on the lower plane does not live—and he who does not will to rise to the higher life usually does not attain to it. The best that we can truthfully say is that almost always men have the instinct for higher things—in their better moments they wish and long that way; but instincts and wishes and longings are far from the reality—and to reach

that, there must be effort and thoughtfulness and a serious purpose and systematic striving, and this is what is practically meant by religion. I will not cite a religious teacher, but a master of the human heart from secular literature. In his light way Shakespeare says: "If to do were as easy as to know what 'twere good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces." Our insight, indeed, runs ahead of our action almost all the time. This is because knowledge, ideas, are almost always a play over the surface of our nature—they are not worked into our structure; but it is our structure that determines what we do. If I should try to define religion in biological language, I should say that it was an effort to make new structure in man, to write ideas into our living substance; and, like all evolution of living structure, this is a slow process, only coming from repeated and prolonged effort, and perhaps under the influence of fiery storm and stress. But why argue? Do we not all know it? Even when courses of action concern our own health, does it not sometimes require a strong, determined will to follow them, so easy is it to do simply what is pleasant or convenient for the moment. Is there not meaning in the old saying, "*Dare* to be well"? And when the higher laws of life are in question, is there any less need of effort, of vigilance? Do we not often go against our own happiness in giving way to fits of temper? Is not hatred and ill-will a most uncomfortable feeling, and yet do we not sometimes fall into it? Is not envy almost a sick feeling, and yet are we not easily envious? And when we turn to the laws of social life—of that whole of which we are a part—how much harder still to rise to them! How easy it is to snatch a gain by which others lose, to seek to have laws passed for our selfish interests, to defraud the community in our taxes! How we need to brace ourselves, to remember the ideal, to keep alive the sense of the law, lest we forget it altogether! How easy it is to slip down to the view that man is only a self-seeking creature after all, and that all that is said about a higher nature and a larger life is useless talk and pother; yes, how easy to *be* simply a self-seeking creature, a part of the dead weight that is everywhere hindering society's advance. I have known men myself who have had higher thoughts, and then have lost them—who have been earnest, religious, and then have ceased to be. Religion itself is no safeguard, unless it is ever a religion. There is no discharge in this fight. And so I cannot assent, friends, to the view that the days of religion are over—that science and morality, as we ordinarily know them, are enough. Morality, as we ordinarily know it, is a sadly imperfect affair—it wants light and air, it wants warmth and light, it wants height and depth, it wants breadth and scope, it wants to be made synonymous with the law of an ascending humanity; and yet to take it in this way is the meaning of an ethical religion. Nothing but remembrance of the great laws of life will keep us in the way of life; nothing but a positive, sustained impulsion to the better will make ourselves or the world better. The right, the just, and all that we picture under the form of a perfect humanity are a conquest; they come in no other way.

I saw last summer, on my way East, a poor, unhappy man who was nigh to the end of his earthly career. His brothers and sisters were with him and full of kind attention. He had been out to Colorado in a vain search for health. Not many years ago he was a robust Harvard student; but, as his brother pathetically remarked to me, he had taken the world as a place to play in, and by living thoughtlessly, fast, and free, had injured himself, and made his fine frame an easy prey to disease. "The world as a place to play in"—the homely phrase stuck in my mind. Evidently the world is not meant to be taken in this way, and those who take it so do it to their cost. No, the world is a living network of laws, and if we do

not attend to them the same forces that might give us unbounding happiness and joy deal out destruction and death. It is a serious world we live in—and religion is simply taking it for what it is. The truth holds throughout. It holds of human societies as truly as of the physical lives of individuals. There are certain laws on the basis of which societies can be built up; and on this basis they become strong and happy and enduring; but if they do not attend to these laws, if they take the world as a place to play in, if they allow themselves to be little more than a mass of contending individuals and of warring interests, the secret of life is not in them, and it is but a question of time when they will vanish away.

Yes, the frailty of everything human is what impresses me—the frailty of health, the frailty of happiness, the frailty of life itself. All these sweet goods are so dependent, so strictly conditioned. Is this a happy world? I do not know whether it is or not; but I think I know of certain conditions that would make it happy. And so with health, and so with life—the conditions come more and more into the foreground, and it is to them we must primarily attend. No matter, in the last analysis, if the world is happy or not, if we can make it happy. No matter if it is just or not, if we can make it just.

If we can make it happy and just—ah, but what attention that implies, what thought, what purpose, what all-conquering effort! You think there is no need of religion any more. I ask what but religion can save us? There is plenty to engage a man in life, if he does not make a point of attending to these things. Money, pleasure, position, lure us—it is more easy than not to follow after them and let other things go. It is not necessary that a man be evil-minded to go this way; he may be simply absent-minded—*i.e.*, destitute of any purpose the other way. It is the critical nature of man's situation, that if one is simply neutral, indifferent, the bad comes in because the good is not there. And so neutrality is really impossible—if the real God is not in your heart, the gods of this world almost inevitably take possession of it. In a word, religion is an absolute necessity—without it the race not only does not progress, it degenerates.

And yet there is no joy to be compared to that of standing up like a man to our tasks in this world. There is no joy like the ardour of conflict—particularly when it is conflict not for ourselves only, but for the wide aims of humanity, for the higher life of humanity. This joy is in the sense of connection with what is beyond ourselves; it is the elevation that comes from being a part of a larger whole. I sometimes think that this is the final meaning and upshot of life—I mean not the joy, but the fact. When one can fight alone or with a few, when not the glory or the success but the rightness of the thing attracts him, when he can fight though he loses, and be loyal though he die, then, it seems to me, he acquires a meaning and a value beyond earthly life and death; he becomes a tried and tested unit of that moral universe of which, after all, this visible universe may be only anticipation and foreshadowing. We conceive of our material atoms as always true to their attractions; they can always be counted on—they depart not a hair's breadth from a certain defined course, which, if we knew all the circumstances, could be mathematically predicted. Hence, perhaps, their practical immortality; they are so useful in the make-up of worlds that they cannot be spared. And who knows but that they may be the outcome of a process of natural selection, in which other atoms perished because they knew no law? Perhaps it is not altogether a fanciful thought. Well, what is the destiny of man but to be true to his law—what, perhaps, is the meaning of the strange riddle of the universe but the finding out and selection of those who will be true? Perhaps this, too, is not altogether fanciful thought—perhaps the true man passes from our sight to live

beyond our sight, being needed to make up other worlds that are to be. Perhaps he can pass from one society to another, from one world to another, and yet have ever the same true and loyal heart. But whether or no, to develop a true loyal heart is the end of life here; it is the highest achievement of life; it brings the highest joy in life, and a peace too deep for words—and this is the meaning of morality taken as a religion.

VI.

DARWINISM IN ETHICS

It is the high and noble thing to do what is good and right of our own accord. We do not reach the heights of morality till goodness is the free choice of the soul. I believe that man, with his wonderful gift of reason, can discern a highest good, and then, unconstrained by all that is without him, can choose it. It constitutes the incomparable dignity of man that he need not be like a cloud driven before the winds, but can, as George Eliot says, "elect his deeds, and be the liege, not of his birth, but of that good alone he has discerned and chosen."[1]

Nevertheless, we have a curious and profound interest in the question as to the tendency of things apart from our own will. We know that we are not masters of our own life; there are conditions outside of us to which we have to conform. To take one of the simplest illustrations, we know that if, on a cold winter day, we are not sufficiently protected against the weather, we shall perish. We must adjust ourselves to our environment, to use a phrase that has come into vogue; we are compelled to, if we wish to live. The tendency of things is thus to encourage and develop prudence. Nature may be said to be on the side of those who are prudent, since those who are not she does not permit to live.

The question is: Does nature sustain any such relation to morality—does the force of things outside of us incline the race to be moral? Or is it, perchance, favourable to immorality; or is it indifferent, so that good and bad men thrive equally well? In other words, is morality a private matter, about which a person need have no more serious concern than about any other question of individual inclination and taste; or is it something having, whether we will or no, issues of life and death? We naturally incline to take the former view. When we transgress any of the laws of morality, we like to say to ourselves that it is our own affair; that nothing outside of us takes cognisance of it, nor will any grave result follow.

It is at this point that the views of Darwin have a wonderful interest. Darwin does not write as an ethical philosopher, but as a naturalist. In his famous chapters in the *Descent of Man*[1] his object is, not to give us a theory of ethics, but to show the part which morality has played in the development of the race. Any one who thinks that

[1] *Spanish Gypsy*, book iii.

[1] Part I., chaps. iii., iv., and v.

morality is a private matter, and that physical strength and mental capacity are the only things that nature takes account of, should read those chapters. Everywhere, according to Darwin, among men as truly as among the lower orders of being, there is a struggle to live; and those who are best fitted to the conditions of life succeed and leave offspring behind them, and those who are less fitted tend to extinction. Any casual variation, by which an individual has an advantage over others, is seized upon, intensified by transmission, and perhaps in time gives rise to a well-marked species.

Physically a man is no match for a bear or a buffalo; in an actual tussle he would surely be worsted. Nonetheless is he their superior by virtue of his intelligence; he invents a spear, a bow-and-arrow, or a gun, and thereby outdoes them. So as between men and races of men; variations in the direction of greater strength of body are of slight importance compared with variations in the direction of higher mental powers; in war itself it is not necessarily the most numerous nation, or the one with the hardiest soldiers, but the one with the ablest generals and in possession of the most ingenious methods of warfare, that gains the victory. But Darwin shows, further, that the possession of moral qualities is an advantage in the struggle for existence; that a race with strong moral feelings would, other things being equal, win in a contest with another race destitute of such feelings; in other words, that nature is on the side of morality as truly as on the side of the strongest arm or the largest brain. Darwinism is often interpreted in a different way; it is often thought to sanction the efforts of the stronger individual to push the weaker to the wall. Let every man stand on his own feet; and those who cannot stand, let them fall, it is said. To practically apply the doctrine: if a man can provide for himself an education, well and good; if he cannot, let him go without it—never should he be helped. If a woman has power to get her rights, very well; if not, let her go without them. If a person is smart enough to defraud another, let him do so; if he is strong enough to do violence to another with impunity, very well—that is his right, as the stronger. This is the creed of unmeasured individualism, and was well expressed by Rob Roy in Wordsworth's poem as the old rule:—

> "That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can."

But it is very crude Darwinism—nay, it is opposed to the teachings of Darwin; for, according to him, our notions of what we should and should not do are derived from the social instincts, and the social instincts contradict such heartless indifference to the welfare of others as the creed of extreme individualism allows. Doubtless such social anarchy did exist in the early ages of the world, in the "ages before conscience"; but the significant fact is that the primitive races without conscience did not perpetuate themselves; that they had no strength, no stamina, no cohesive power in the struggle with those superior races in whom the social instincts were developed; that, so far as they do survive to-day, they survive as savages, and are on the border line between man and the brute.

Let us observe now, in detail, how morality helps to build man up, so that, by his very love of life, he is naturally deterred from those courses of conduct that conscience condemns. (1) A peaceful disposition is one element of morality. I do not mean the disposition weakly to submit to injuries, but the unwillingness to inflict injuries; I mean the contrary of a violent and quarrelsome temper. At first sight it may seem as if violent people injure others rather than themselves, as if their violence gives them an advantage in the struggle to live. But turn the matter round, and ask, as between peaceable men and quarrelsome men, other things being equal, which are the more likely to suffer violence in turn, and themselves come to an untimely

end? I think there cannot be a doubt that peaceful men are more likely to survive and rear offspring than violent men; that violence is apt to be a boomerang, striking at last the perpetrator of it; that the ways of violence, even in uncivilised societies, are the ways of death, and the ways of peace are the ways of life. (2) Temperate habits are another element of morality. The intemperate man, who indulges his appetite for intoxicating drinks, thinks it his own affair, and that he will not greatly suffer; but the laws of life think differently—they cut short his days. It is a statistical fact that intemperate persons at the age of thirty, in England, are not likely to live more than thirteen or fourteen years longer, while the expectation of life of the average country labourer at that age is forty years. (3) Another element of morality is respect for woman, and the sense of the sanctity of the marriage relation. Does it make no difference if men or women lead profligate lives? So profligate persons are apt to think; they are rarely serious about it. But nature is opposed to profligacy, for she will allow profligate women to have but few, if any, children; it is as if she had a distaste for their breed — wanted it stopped. In the natural course of things, profligate men, as Darwin remarks, rarely marry; on their side, too, the breed of those with ungoverned lusts tends to extinction. And if, in another way, men or women sin against nature's laws, and in solitude and darkness practise the crimes that the light of day would blush to look upon, does the darkness hide them, and nature take no cognisance? Witness the weakness that comes on—the weakness of body and weakness of mind, the loss of memory, the childishness, yes, the sterility; it is as if nature would cover them with contempt. And in regard to the persistent disuse of moral feeling generally, do we realise what one of our highest scientific authorities, Maudsley,[1] tells us, that by it a man may succeed in manufacturing insanity in his progeny, and that insane persons, if they are allowed to propagate, become at last a race of sterile idiots?

Look at the matter on a wider scale. Consider men, not as individuals, but as societies. If we think that natural selection favours simply the strongest in body or mind, consider the history of the family, the most rudimentary of human societies. What would a family be without some measure of unselfishness? To answer, we have to go to the lowest savages. Among the Andamanese the husband cares for his wife until the child that is born to them is weaned; then the mother has to look out for herself and for her child—the father seeks another mate. Is nature indifferent, and do we imagine that this is a thriving tribe? The fact is that, according to a recent reporter, the Andamanese are gradually dying out; he saw but one woman who had as many as three children; few members of the tribe live beyond the age of forty.[1] And now suppose the mothers had as little unselfishness as the fathers; that they let their offspring care for themselves as soon as weaned—the tribe would probably in a generation or two become extinct. It is some measure of unselfish feeling that allows our race to be perpetuated at all. Yes, Darwin shows that the social instincts, to some extent, exist in the lower animal, so that there is no impassable chasm in that respect between them and man; timid birds will face great danger to defend their young. If there were no unselfishness, it is doubtful if we should have anything in the world at all but the elements and insensate plants, or perhaps the very lowest forms of animal life, whose offspring need no care. All the higher forms of animal life, as well as men, exist because unselfishness has watched over the beginnings of their existence; and what mainly distinguishes human

[1] *Popular Science Monthly*, September, 1870.

[1] Spencer's *Sociology*, i. 668.

beings from animals, along, of course, with higher intelligence, is that the social instincts in men are intenser, and cover longer periods, and have a wider range. According to Darwin, human beings are simply that portion of the animal creation in whom variations in the direction of unselfishness and intelligence have been transmitted and perpetuated, by which they have secured a firmer foothold and a more commanding place on the earth. Think of it: if the fishes of the sea, or the wild animals of the earth, or even the birds of the air, had the fellow-feeling and the intelligence that men have, would they allow themselves to be so easily caught or captured or shot? Would they not be a match for man; and unless some new variations, giving greater power on the one side or the other, arose, would it not be a pitched battle between them and man? We are men because, along with more of mind, we do care for one another; they are animals because they are to such an extent dissocial rather than social, and because, in a contest, each one is left so generally to fight his own battle.

Consider next the community or the tribe. What parental feeling is to the family, community or tribal feeling is on the larger scale. Do we think it makes no difference whether our unselfishness goes beyond our families; that all we have to do is to care for ourselves and our children; that patriotism and zeal for the public welfare are idle sentiment; and that obedience to the laws is necessary only so far as it is for our own interest? Darwin, and those who have written in his spirit, do not think so; and history proves that they are in the right. In times of peace, as one writer[1] remarks, sleek and prosperous selfishness may give a certain element of strength to a society. But these are not the times that test a society; it is when dangers arise, either from without or from within—it is in times of peril that the real strength and cohesiveness of a community are tested. Can it put down internal dissensions that threaten its life? Can it withstand a foreign foe? For, as Darwin shows, not only individuals struggle to live, but communities and nations; and natural selection tends to build up or to destroy peoples with the same fatality with which it determines the fate of individual lives. Who does not see the truth of what Darwin points out, that even in the case of animals who live in herds, and defend themselves or attack their enemies in concert, they must be in some degree faithful to one another, and if they have a leader be obedient to him, else they will likely be exterminated? How much more truly is this the case with men! Suppose the members of a tribe are given to murder, robbery, and treachery among themselves, how long will they hold together, even if they have no external foe? And if they have, how easily will they be subjugated! The fact is, that a tribe or community cannot live at all unless there is more of morality than of immorality in it; and the great amount of wrong and crime that exists in some savage communities seems so only in comparison with the higher standards of morality that are recognised in civilised communities, and does not interfere with the fact that it is less than among savages who scarcely live in communities at all, and have few, if any, fixed customs or laws. It is as if nature would force a community, whether possessing any disinterested love of virtue or not, to learn some semblance of it; for only those communities that do so learn—whose members acquire some measure of self-control, of faithfulness, of public spirit, of obedience to law—

[1] Prof. Dr. C. C. Everett on "The New Ethics," in the *Unitarian Review*, October, 1878—a most suggestive and often eloquent article, reprinted, it may be added, in the author's recent volume, *Poetry, Comedy, and Duty*. I am also indebted to Prof. Georg von Gizycki's valuable article on "Ethics and the Development Theory," in the *Popular Science Monthly*, July, 1885 (translated from the *Deutsche Rundschau*).

survive, and others, who fail to meet the conditions which Nature fixes, perish. Darwin says in so many words: "A tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection. At all times, throughout the world, tribes have supplanted other tribes; and, as morality is one important element in their success, the standard of morality and the number of well-endowed men will thus everywhere tend to rise and increase."

All this holds good equally of civilised peoples. The same things that lifted the social savage above the unsocial savage or animal, and gave him the pre-eminence, lift the civilised man out of the ranks of savagery altogether, and give to civilised States rightful pre-eminence in the world. Crude interpreters of Darwin's theory would have us eschew all philanthropy, shut up our asylums and hospitals, abolish poor laws, and let the weak and the helpless take care of themselves, or die. But this would not be rising to a higher stage of civilisation, but would be relapsing into barbarism—copying after the Indians, who leave their feeble comrades to perish on the plains; or the Fijians, who, when their parents get old or fall ill, bury them alive; or those animals that expel a wounded animal from the herd, or gore or worry it to death. Nay, there are savages, and even animals, who are superior in sentiment to these heartless Darwinians; for Darwin tells us of Indian crows that fed two or three of their blind companions, and says that he himself saw a dog who never passed a cat that lay sick in a basket without giving her a few licks with his tongue—the surest sign of kind feeling in a dog. Destroy the social instincts, dry up the founts of sympathy and pity in man, and you strike at the social bond itself; society would be dissolved into anarchy, and the long, slow, painful work of building up the race of man would have to be taken up again from the beginning. Let any community to-day try to organise itself on the extreme individualistic plan, with no charity, since each man looks after himself alone, with justice for those who are able to command it, the rest getting along without it as best they can; and let it enter into competition with other communities in whose midst the poor and sick are wisely cared for, and justice is done to every man, woman, and child, though there be some who are totally unable to get it for themselves—let the struggle come to a clash of arms, and can anyone doubt what the result will be? Selfishness, Professor Everett says, will give its money, it will not give its life, for the common cause. If the social spirit has been weak in peace, it will not, by a miracle, become suddenly strong in war. The unsocial community will go down, as it deserves to go down, before the enthusiasm, the courage, the devotion of men who have been bred in a social community to habits of sympathy and public spirit. Yes, if the community whose principle was "every man for himself" were, by a bit of good fortune, to be isolated, and never called to enter into a struggle with other communities, I believe in time it would perish from dissensions within itself; it would disintegrate, like any organism of matter whose particles are no longer held together by any common attraction, and from which the animating breath of life has fled.

The thing that builds up a community, a nation, is not less but more sympathy and public spirit—more of all the virtues that spring from these sources. Think for a moment simply of obedience, reverence for law, whether the law is made by a chief or by a people for itself—what strength, what an almost irresistible power, would a whole people trained to such a habit have! The Spartans were not equal in intellectual power to other Grecian States, but for a short time they held the supremacy over all Greece;

and when I think of the three hundred who defended the pass at Thermopylæ against the Persians, and held it at such fearful odds until their last man had fallen, and remember that according to their poet nothing but obedience to the laws of Sparta kept them at their post, I do not wonder that a country which bred such a soldiery rose once to the very head of Greece!

"Stranger, go, and to the Spartans tell
That here, obeying their commands, we fell,"

stands graven on the rock as their memorial.

Socrates anticipated the thought of Darwin and of Bagehot,[1] one of the most fruitful thinkers who has followed in Darwin's wake, when he said that State in which the citizens pay most respect to the laws is in the best condition in peace, and is invincible in war;[2] and Socrates himself had such a sense of the sanctity of the laws that he refused to flatter and supplicate the judges at his trial (a practice which the laws forbade), and although, had he consented to do anything of the kind, he might easily have been acquitted, as Xenophon says,[3] he preferred to die abiding by the laws, rather than, transgressing them, to live. What could withstand, other things being equal, a nation of men like Socrates? I believe that the things that tend to make a people strong, permanently strong; that tend to give it a lasting advantage in the struggle for existence; that make it the fittest, and always the fittest, to survive—are good things, moral things; things that conscience, from its ideal standpoint, would approve. This does not apply to temporary victories, but to those that are held. *Respice finem*—look to the end and issue of all things. No one can doubt that those great eastern empires that we have glimpses of in connection with Hebrew history and legend—the Egyptian, the mighty Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian—perished in turn because they were not fit to live. No one can doubt that Greece fell a prey to Rome when she was no longer worthy to rule herself. No one can doubt that imperial Rome herself fell when it was best she should fall; and that it was owing to natural selection that the barbarians of the North became then the leaders of the world's progress, since out of their splendid energy and purer stock the foremost nations of a new world have come. It is difficult to speak of the present and the future; but the same laws will hold good. Always, I believe, will the nations that have anything like a permanent leadership in the world's affairs be the best nations—I mean those that have the largest amount of virtue and intelligence within their borders. It may be, indeed, that no nations at present existing will be permanent; this would not be contrary to natural selection, but a proof of its power. It may be that none of them have the conditions of permanency; for natural selection is, I believe, as high in its demands, as severe, as unrelenting, as any ideal of the Deity that has ever been conceived. Nations that are full of selfishness and injustice cannot stand; they will be turned and over-turned; the great powers of nature will not allow them to last. Nations with ruling classes given up to luxury, to effeminate habits, to wantonness, to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," and to contempt of the poor and the weak, will not stand. "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good."[1] So speaks Natural Selection to-day, and always will, for it is a power as dread, as summary, and as almighty as Jahveh. Nations full of violence towards weaker countries, eager with

[1] See his *Physics and Politics*.
[2] Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, iv. 4, 15.
[3] *Ibid*, iv. 4, 4.

[1] Ezekiel xvi. 49, 50.

yawning necks to swallow them up and digest them for their own purposes, will not stand; they who are insolent and know no right above the sword shall perish by the sword. The power of natural selection is a moral power, and nothing, no success or triumph conceived and begotten in injustice, shall stand. This great Judge of all the earth holds up the balances, and says to the nations, For every act of injustice thou shalt pay! England, France, Germany, America—each thinks it is dear to the heart of Destiny, and cannot fail; and Destiny whispers through all the experience of the past, "I care for none of you; you may go, have your little day, and pass away, as Babylon and Greece and Rome have done before you. I care for justice, for a State of virtuous citizens, with pure homes and clean hearts and honest lips; men and women who put truth above life, and would rather their State should fall than that it should rest on injustice. I call for this. Give it to me, O Sons of men, and you shall be dear to me; I shall cherish you, and your work shall stand while the earth lasts!"

This is my interpretation of the ethics of Darwin. Darwin does not give us a theory of ethics—or rather, so far as he does, I should have something to say in criticism of it; but he does a greater service, I almost think, than if he had given us a perfect theory—he shows *how ethics works in the world*. It is a great and consoling belief that the powers of nature are on the side of man's struggles after justice and a perfect good. The Mighty Power, hid from our gaze by the thin screen of nature and of nature's laws, is not in love with you or me, but it is with our struggles after a perfect right, for to them it gives fruition—and they are the salt that keeps the earth from spoiling, and their effect is undying, while all else is being thwarted, cut short, and passes away. Every brave act we do, and every true word we utter, help to build up human life here on the earth, and every mean act and false word tend to pull it down and destroy it. I have spoken of peoples and nations—let us not think that these are things too large for individual actions to count upon. The fate of a nation depends at last, not on kings or parliaments or legislatures, but on the lives and characters of the individual men and women who compose it. "The well-being of the State depends upon the well-doing of its individual members."[1] We think we are not responsible for the evil and wrong there are in society—we are, to the extent that we submit to them. A great wrong cannot be done by a community unless there is the spirit of wrong, or of tolerance for wrong, widespread among its members. Each one of us, no matter how unimportant we seem, counts as a factor in the public sentiment from which good things or bad are born. Frederick W. Robertson—that tender and strenuous spirit too soon passed away from earth—said: "There are current maxims in Church and in State, in society, in trade, in law, to which we yield obedience. For this obedience everyone is responsible. For instance, in trade and in the profession of law everyone is the servant of practices the rectitude of which his heart can only half approve; everyone complains of them, yet all are involved in them. Now, when such sins reach their climax, as in the case of national bankruptcy or an unjust acquittal, there may be some who are in a special sense the actors in the guilt; but evidently for the bankruptcy each member of the community is responsible in that degree and so far as he has himself acquiesced in the duplicities of public dealing. Every careless juror, every unrighteous judge, every false witness, has done his part in the reduction of society to that state in which the monster injustice has been perpetrated."[2] Yes, you do count; and the only difference is that you may count in those influences that help to build man up here on the earth, or in those that tend

[1] Statement of Principles of Chicago Society for Ethical Culture.

[2] Robertson's *Sermons*, Third Series, p. 147.

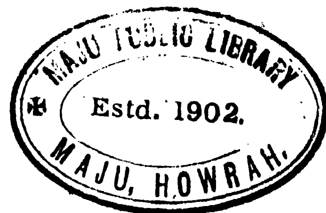
to weaken and undo him. You may build on the sands, and the floods will come and wash your work away; or on the rock, and your work will stand for ever. You may help to make a nation of money-getters, close, hard, contemptuous of the weak, sacrificing honour and shame and the sense of humanity, even life itself, for the sake of amassing riches, only to see the nation, if you could live on, crumble and disintegrate, and its wealth in ruins; or you may cast your lot with those who would be lovers of their kind, who would rather see justice done than amass riches, who would be clean in life, and honour woman and protect the defenceless; and, if you do not win the nation to your side, you, or those who follow after you, will form the saving remnant, by whom and through whom a new and wiser nation may arise. Men trying to rear States without justice in their hearts are like Sisyphus rolling his giant stones up hill, only to see them pulled down again by natural gravity; and when one sees them anxious, striving, thinking with laws and constitutions and courts and armies to buttress themselves about, labouring so with their destiny, one thinks of poor Sisyphus in Homer's lines, heaving and straining, the sweat the while pouring down his limbs, and the dust rising upward from his head. "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; seek justice, relieve the oppressed," is the voice of Natural Selection as well as of Israel's God. Otherwise man's work is vanity, and all the labour and pain of it are for nothing; the great God of the world will not allow it to stand.

I permit myself two remarks in closing. Think of the Athenian race, whose average ability Francis Galton, another writer who has followed in Darwin's wake, says[1] was nearly two grades higher than our own—that is, as much as our race is above that of the African negro. Why did this marvellously gifted race decline? Galton says, because of social immorality; because, in plain language, marriage became unfashionable and was avoided, and courtesans held sway. Now, every man to-day, whether actually immoral or not, who has light thoughts of woman, who is not indignant when she is dishonoured, who lets light jests pass his lips or lewd thoughts linger in his mind, helps to swell the tide of our social immorality, for he helps to make the atmosphere in which it grows. Acts do not come from nothing; they come from thoughts and words, and what we hear others say—from a thousand and one nameless things that seem in themselves to count for nothing.

On the other hand, let us not imagine that the quiet homely virtues, the graces of the heart, count for nothing with the great powers of nature with which we deal. Never let us think that physical strength is everything; it is not everything, even in the animal world. Professor Everett has beautifully said that to the powers of natural selection "the delicate, the graceful, the tender, the beautiful, are as dear as the fierce and the strong. It was the great law of natural selection itself that taught the nightingale to sing, and that painted the humming-bird with his changeful hues. It is this that whispers to the timid hare to flee, and this that binds the gentle sheep together in their harmless federation." The gentler virtues all count in humanity's struggle for existence. As there are no light thoughts of human suffering that do not help to make men cruel, so there are no sympathy and pity that do not help to draw men nearer together, and make them stronger in any time of danger or distress. Quiet fortitude in a mother makes brave sons and daughters. Love in peace makes heroism in times of danger. Selfishness disintegrates and disorganises; love builds up and welds together. Nations stand not on dollars, not on armies, not on police, but on righteousness; and if unrighteousness becomes rampant in a community, not all its dollars or its police will save it. You and I count,

[1] *Hereditary Genius*, p. 343.

living quiet, inconspicuous lives as we do. Oh, let us count for good, for purity, for unselfishness—for all that makes human life strong and stable on the earth!



VII.

THE SOCIAL IDEAL

It is sometimes said that all morality involves social relations. There can be no question that a large part of it does. What is justice but a certain kind of conduct or relation between man and man? What is love, what is kindness, what is generosity, what is chivalry, save as there are objects to which these feelings go out? What is truth, if there is no one to whom to be truthful? What are fidelity and loyalty but ideal types of social relationship? I need not speak of patriotism, of public spirit, so patent are their references. Even what are called personal virtues, are they, after all, entirely personal? Veracity is sometimes called a personal virtue; but plainly it means keeping one's word with another. Chastity is called a personal duty; but surely chastity is not a denial of the relation of the sexes, but a pure relation of the sexes. Temperance is a personal duty; yet temperance is hardly an end, but a means to an end—namely, the maintenance of the supremacy of the rational and moral in us. The temperate man is so much more a man; but as a man his sphere and duty are, in large measure, with men, and temperance is to fit him to take his part well in the life and work of humanity.

Even when we assert some stricter truth, some nobler strain of honour than ordinarily obtains among men, it is not so much that we sever ourselves from society as that we yield to the claims of an ideal society; if we see and will a higher justice than the State commands, it is that we own ourselves members of a higher State, which exists as yet only in idea. Every rising above custom or written statute is an assertion that the ideal is our true home; it is but an espousing of the ideal as over against the incompleteness of the actual and the sensible. For it is not so much to society as actually constituted as to the social ideal that we belong.

But though our life is properly in society, it is possible for us to live apart and according to our own individual caprice, if we will. Such individualism is the primal sin. Falsehood, unchastity, every form of social wrong, are but exalting personal caprice over against the law of social well-being. Morality, in other than its strictly personal form, consists in taking account at least of two, another with myself, in determining my action. And morality widens and embraces new duties as the circles of relationship widen, and as the law of each larger circle becomes in its turn the law for me. As matter of history, so long as a man was bent on self-preservation merely, he was hardly more than an animal; he began to be human when the thought of his family determined him, when he owned himself a part of it and acted for it, to maintain and defend it. He became still more human when he was a member of a community, and felt the welfare and the honour of the

community to be his own; still more human was he when he won the thought of humanity, and would tolerate no interests of his own, nor action of his community, which tended to hurt or injure or wrong any, even the humblest, child of man. It is evident that the universality of our social feeling is the measure of its real worth. If I feel an insult to myself or my family, or the community in which I live, and yet have no sense of wrong when someone outside these circles is similarly affronted, plainly I do not value man as man—that is, am not really human—but have simply a peculiar feeling for those who are near me. Some sense of the claims of every human being, though he be the lowest and the worst, and that will not allow us to trample upon him though he be fairly in the dust at our feet; some feeling of indescribable awe, even though it be blended with pity, when any human form passes before our eye—this is the measure and the test, yes, the very significance, of morality.

It is this that determines the form of the social ideal. And let me say, before proceeding farther, that I do not attempt to describe, to picture, the social ideal. This has been a pleasing and ennobling occupation for many men, but I have neither the wit nor the imagination requisite thereto. I can only in a simple way indicate its principle. And this principle is, in a word, that in the ideal order every man shall be an end as well as a means. I need not point out that this principle has not been generally recognised in the past. Not only has slavery been almost universal, but there have been elaborate justifications of slavery by some of the greatest philosophers. We now hardly know what a battle the Anti-slavery reformers before the civil war had to fight. The notion of the universal rights of man is a modern one. It is neither in the Old Testament nor in the New. I doubt if it be in the Scriptures of any of the religions of the world. Plato took slavery for granted, and appears to have justified it in remarking that the statesman should reduce to that condition those who are ignorant and base.[1] Aristotle argued for slavery, that it was not only a legal part of the economy of society, but that it was grounded in nature, in the difference between those endowed with bodily strength and those who possessed mental power.[2] In fact, against a very wide experience and against the clever reasonings of some of the thinkers of the race, our brave reformers had but to plant themselves on the ideal ground of the rights, the claims, of every human being, and say: "What though these rights have been denied in almost all the past; what though the cries of outraged human nature have been suppressed, and the slaves become willing slaves—do not the rights exist, shall not the cries now be heard, and shall the slaves not themselves be summoned to arise out of their deathly sleep?" How specious may you find the defences of past slavery, made even now! Only the other day I was reading a writer who says: "Refinement is only possible where leisure is possible; and slavery first made it possible. It created a set of persons born to work that others may not work, and not to think that others may think.......The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could not have had the steady calm which marks them, if they had themselves been teased and hurried about their flocks and herds."[3] One need not deny that, as matter of history, there is some truth in this; nonetheless does morality say that it would be better that refinement should not exist than that it should rest on so

[1] Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen*, ii. 1 (3te Aufl.), S. 755. Cf. Plato's *Statesman*, 309.

[2] *Ibid*, ii. 2, S. 690. Cf. Aristotle's *Politics*, i. 5.

[3] Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, chap. ii., § 3. Cf. Tylor (*Anthropology*, p. 435): "Though the civilised world has outgrown the ancient institution [slavery], the benefits which early society gained from it still remain. It was through slave-labour that agriculture and industry increased, that wealth accumulated, and leisure was given to priests, scribes, poets, philosophers, to raise the level of men's minds."

unrighteous a foundation. History tells us what was, not what might have been; and there are other ways in which an equal and a better refinement might have come without any enslaving of one human being by another. I do not think there *is* any genuine refinement that does not consist with a fine respect for the rights of others. Every deference, every courtesy, every kindness that is not in some degree shown to all with whom we come in contact, indicates a hidden root of selfishness from which they spring.

The form of the social ideal is then that of equality. Not, indeed, similarity of place and function for everyone; not that all should do the same work or get the same returns for their work; but simply that all should be in turn ends as well as means, that no one should dare make of another a mere instrument to his own satisfactions, but should regard him as having an independent worth and dignity of his own. Ah, when shall the time come when the name MAN shall have more honour in our eyes than any title of rank or power; when in every man we shall see the king that is really there, though his crown be soiled and his garments tattered; when our proudest thought shall be, as we look back upon our own past, that in every relation of life we have owned and honoured the man, that we have remembered the ideal royal brotherhood to which we all belong? I believe it is possible not to rest in our own thought till to the eye of the soul that time shall have come; till in vision we see humanity transfigured; till the everlasting principles of justice are inwrought into every fibre of its life; till one tide of love and of joy sweep through it, and it is indeed lifted out of the realm of the things that come and go, and becomes a partner in the eternity of the purpose that created it. I see not how it is possible to stop short of this. I see not how one can be content with aiming at slightly ameliorated earthly conditions. I see not how the impulse that leads him to go so far does not lead him to go farther. I see no rest save in the thought of the perfect. I see no satisfaction, no peace for the individual soul, save in losing itself in allegiance to that limitless idea, in making it to move us, stir us, impel us, and give a limitless sanctity to each particular act we do.

I believe in a "City of the Light!"[1] It *is* the social ideal; and from the thought of it, from the consecration to it, and the ordering of our lives in accordance with its demands, I look for a new birth of religion in the world. We are builders of that city. There are those who, not in lightness, but in a sad sincerity, abandon prayer. It is no longer possible to think of the city as a boon coming down out of the heavens—to look for it from without. The burden is laid on human beings; honour calls us to bear it; the very purpose of our being is to bear it. A voice from out the unseen itself seems to say: "Arise, O Man! from thy knees, and act. I call thee to be not a suppliant, but a creator; re-perform the primal magic now, and out of the chaos and the darkness that thou seest within and about thee bring thou order and bring thou light!" If prayers would bring the "Kingdom of God," should we not think that eighteen centuries of Christian praying would have brought it? And if they have not, if the condition of the world, the selfishness of human hearts, the injuries, the wrongs, the hardness and contempt of the higher laws and commandments, yes, and the low content and practical unbelief in the possibility of anything better that so widely prevail, are all an open and patent contradiction of that ideal order of things—what is the lesson, what is the moral to be drawn from the facts themselves, but that so long as we look without and above the answer will never come; that religion, if it will be religion and no more child's play, must radically change its attitude, and set men themselves to the

[1] The reference is to the beautiful lines under that title by Professor Adler.

accomplishment of the task which they have so long entrusted to another?

Having now considered the social ideal as regards its principle, the element of perfection belonging to it, and the true method for its accomplishment, let us ask, What is its practical meaning for us to-day; what is its bearing upon our political institutions, and the forms and habits of our social life? First, in regard to the State. In ancient times ethics was almost identical with politics; a truly moral life was one which subserved the interests of the State. Our ideal is wider. Aristotle would regard barbarians—that is, those who were not Greeks—as little better than animals, and justified war to the end of making them slaves.[1] To us, nations have rights over against nations, as individuals over against individuals; and it is not permitted one nation to make another an instrument to its own ends merely. The social ideal demands, in a word, a law of nations. It does not forbid war, nor does it forbid conquest; but it forbids either of these for selfish aggrandisement. It makes the holding of a dependency for commercial interests and profit merely, without a conscious purpose of educating and civilising and fitting those who belong to it for the duties of citizenship, a crime. It was such a mere business dependency that Great Britain wished to make of her colonies in America, and it was this that roused their indignation and led the embattled farmers at Concord stream to fire

"..... the shot heard round the world."

And though I grant that civilisation has a perfect right to dispossess barbarism of an exclusive and profitless occupation of the soil, it is nonetheless a crime, and a heinous crime, to do as our country has done—treat the dispossessed barbarians as if they had no claims whatever upon us. The Indians are human beings, they have the rights of human beings; and if they cannot defend those rights, all the more shame on that Government which will wantonly trample upon them. The Indians might have been elevated; they may still be elevated. It may be questioned whether there is a race of men on the earth which, if humanely and wisely treated, may not lose its savagery and take a place in the ranks of civilised peoples. Not all the interests of civilisation justify injustice. Rather is it the problem for the superior race to lift the other with it, to use its superiority and its strength for service, and not for oppression.

[1] *Politics*, i. 8.

The principle of the social ideal holds, further, in the relations between the officers of any particular State and its citizens. The time is gone by when any king or emperor can lay claim to the unrequited service of his subject. In equity the claim never did exist, though it has existed often enough in fact. Nay, the sting is half taken out of monarchy, and the reproach almost from despotism itself, when the aim of the monarch and the despot comes to be to use his power for securing and defending the rights of the citizens as against one another or against any external power.[1] One may be freer under a monarch than under the rule of a class. It is not the name or form of government, but whether the interests of all its citizens are made supreme, that is of highest moment in any State. What are the holders of public office in our own land? Are they there for service, or are they there for personal profit? Are they seeking their own ends merely, or are they respecting and securing the ends of the general welfare? I will not answer the question. And, in truth, I am not so much concerned for a particular answer as to bring out the meaning of the principle of which I am treating; and I ask, Is not the very notion of it faint and uncertain in the public mind? Is it not almost forgotten that men in entering the public service

[1] This may be said to have been the significance of the Absolute Monarchy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as contrasted with the old Feudal monarchy.

do so *for* public service? Is it not deemed natural that, once in the public employ, they should reward themselves for their laborious exertions in getting there—yes, and their friends also, their faithful friends who helped them in the struggle? What matters it that, in accordance with our democratic principles, we have rotation of office, if the effect is only, when a change of parties or of "bosses" comes, to introduce a new set of selfish men to office, and thus to distribute the corruption and make it wider and more general in the community? It is said that we want "business principles" in our civil service; and in the sense in which the reformers use this phrase I entirely agree with them—in the sense of fitness, and of fitness determined by no personal or partizan preferences on the part of those who appoint. But in another sense of the word "business," the very root and foundation of the evil in the matter, is the forgetting the essential distinction between politics and business. Business! we all know what that means: it is for profit, and not for anyone or everyone, but for ourselves. The business impulse is to make that profit as great as possible; and with this idea and aim in politics what other result could we expect than just that of which we hear now general complaint? I maintain, on the other hand, that public life is not business; that it is a stage higher than business; that a dignity attaches to it that cannot attach to any undertakings on our own account; that it virtually means giving up private aims, and adopting public ones; that it means living in the State and for the State; that the pecuniary return which one receives is not reward or profit or gain, but salary, given not so much *for*, as to support one *in*, service. It is the idea of the "salaried service of the State" that needs to be introduced; and if our office-holders do not have it, and our Congress has so imperfectly grasped it, it is because the community has not got it—because well nigh everything, forsooth, being with us a matter of business, religion itself sometimes being no better, we do not distinctly see why politics should be the sole exception.

Moreover, if the principle of the social ideal has this application to the State, it has also another. The social ideal commands that the stronger members of society respect the weaker. The state of nature is the reverse of this, and only as political communities are formed is protection vouchsafed to the weak, and a curb placed on the self-assertive passions of the strong. What is the meaning of our courts of justice but to see that what many a man would like to do he shall not do, or, if he has done it, that he be punished? What would the civil rights of any of us to-day amount to if there were no Government to guarantee them? In fact, any civilised Government at the present day is a partial realisation of the social ideal, and all such Governments have an increasing part to play in furthering it. For where shall the limit be set of Government interference in behalf of the weak as against the strong? Does Government exist solely to protect life and property? But suppose the life of many is barely worth the having, why may not Government interfere to make it better worth the having? Why do we have public education, why do we have interference with the order of industrial life, and the prevention of the employment of children under a certain age, or of women save under certain conditions? Men can live without education; and children and women can live, while they live, though they go to work before they are ten years of age and work more than ten or twelve hours a day. The State evidently recognises by these its provisions that it is not merely to protect life, but to make life tolerable. Why may it not aim to make it more than tolerable? Why may it not strive to give opportunity at least for every life to become a positive blessing, both to itself and to others? And as for property, why may not the State aim, not merely at protecting it as it stands, however it may have been won, but, without

arbitrarily disposing of it, at so legislating that property may be more generally distributed? Is the State doing its duty when by the character of its legislation, by its granting of privileges, it tends to assist the process of the accumulation of property in the hands of a few, and to widen the gap between the different classes in the community? I have no scheme to propose; I am simply asking for the limits of the application of a principle. And I do not believe that there are any limits to be set, as the philosophers say, *à priori;* the limits are simply in what the State *can accomplish;* and this depends in turn upon what those think and want who compose the State. A revolution of public sentiment, or an awakening of the public thought, might lead to the enlargement of the sphere of the State's action, so that it should do for the less favoured portions of the community what now it does not dream of doing. It is not any particular duty, but the idea and mission of the State, that I now urge; I urge that it stands for justice, for the common good; that, when men act defiantly of the common good, they are to be brought to submission before it; that its goal is indeed no other than the goal of religion —a perfect social state—and that it differs from religion only in the element of force which it uses; that a genuine religion and a genuine and far-seeing politics would go hand-in-hand. The social ideal is the goal of all our institutions. There ought to be no merely secular politics. The statesman too should be a priest, and while toiling, planning here among the intricacies and difficulties and disorders of public life, should have his eye on the heavens, and be guided and sanctified by the principle that makes heaven and earth one.

But the social ideal has closer applications to us. We must all live, but we have not all equal control of the means of subsistence, nor equal opportunities to create them. We have not all first-hand access to the soil; and we are dependent not only on those who cultivate it, but on those who, in whatever way, get control of its products. We want not only food, but clothing, shelter, means of comfort, even of luxury; for in the economic sense all is counted luxury that delights the eye, that quickens the intelligence, that developes the higher parts of our being. Every man has in him the possibilities of a more than merely material existence. Food, clothing, shelter, are after all but a scaffolding, on which the nobler house of the soul is to be reared. But, owing to varying circumstances and varying natural abilities, one part of the community comes to be dependent on the other for the supply of its physical and higher necessities. In a word, there arises the relation of employer and employed. This is not the original relation, which was rather that of master and slave, but it is that which now well-nigh universally prevails in civilised countries. Can we hesitate to say that the principle of the social ideal has an application here; that in industry, in business of every kind, we should not use any man as means to our ends merely, but should also regard him as an end in himself? I can see no reason for making the exception. I know I may seem to contradict the ordinary principles of business; I know the maxim is that everyone must look out for himself. But I must dissent from such a maxim; for though in form it is perfectly true, and everyone must look out for himself, the negative that lurks behind it is a lying negative, for that I am not bound to look out for another is false. It was a specious excuse for that sin that had "the primal eldest curse upon it": it is a denial of the social bond; it hides that spirit which, if it had unrestricted course and were not checked by selfish prudence, would make an anarchy of social life. Yet I would not have an air of harshness in saying this. I would not speak in my own name; but I would rather call up the procession of weary, toil-worn faces, of bowed forms, of stunted figures, starting in the earliest beginnings of

human history and not failing down to the present day, who have toiled and stitched and hammered and dug and delved and sweated for man, and bid this long procession, this unbroken array, plead for me. Ah! their words, nay, their speechless entreaties, their dumb and reproachful looks, are more moving, more eloquent, than can possibly be any words of mine. They say, they mean, though they could hardly distinctly explain to you, that there was something in them which never had a chance to grow; that though now and then they caught a glimpse of the light, and knew it by the joy it gave them, the darkness was ever shutting down upon them, till at last they did not know whether there was any light more; that their whole existence was spent in getting the means for further existence; that they knew that what they produced went somewhere, but it was not to them, save to enable them to continue the weary round; that they knew that great things were in the world, that great deeds were doing, but that they had no part or share in them, and they could only pray the gods to give them grace to bear, for to enjoy was evidently not allowed them.

Ah! is there a sadder thought in the world than that of the waste of the possibilities that are thrown into it? Happy is he who never had this reflection in looking back upon his own life, but happier still he who has never been the cause of such reflections or of such a fact in another! There is no need of waste. I speak not, of course, of the order of nature, but of the order of human life, over which we have control. It is not the gods who decree it, but we who permit, nay, who cause it; every failure to act according to the principle of the ideal which we are considering is a permitting, a virtual causing, of such a waste. I know the employer gives his workmen wages; but what determines the rate of wages that he pays? If his motive is profit, and he proceeds according to business principles, he gives only so much wages as he must give in order to gain that profit. If the workmen simply want or demand more, he does not need to give more: only when they are in a situation virtually to force him to give more will he do so. In a word, he considers simply his own ends, and uses others merely as means to those ends. Of course, it is understood that in so speaking I have not in mind any individual man or men, but simply men *so far as actuated by business motives.* It is a principle I have in mind—a principle contradictory to the principle of the social ideal.

Sometimes one may hear the commercial estimate of workmen expressed in the most outspoken and unhesitating manner. "Will any business man," said the president of a horse-car company in Boston, a few years ago, "tell me the difference between buying labour and buying hay, grain, horses, and other supplies?" And I think the answer must be given that there is no difference, from the purely business standpoint. If the employer has only his own ends in view, what difference can it make to him what the means are by which the ends are reached? A machine in a factory is just as good as a man, perhaps as a dozen men, viewed merely as so much muscular force and skill; and the purely business manufacturer will have machines just as fast as he can get them, for in fact they require no wages at all. He may use machines, and the finer and more ingenious they are the better; and he may treat them as he likes. He may make fire, wind, steam, water, all the forces of nature, his servants. Yes, he may harness the beasts of the field, and make them to do his bidding; for I join in that old sentiment of human dignity which finds all that is not moral and rational to be rightfully tributary to man. But when he touches another human being this whole order of subordination ceases, and he dares not—in the name of the Highest Law, I say it, he dares not—make him a mere tool or servant for himself. Rather must he say: "Together we stand, together we win what-

ever recompense for our toil we do win; and though I, as the leader in the enterprise, have the right to the leader's honour, and to the leader's share of the recompense; and though, as I undertake the task, you must submit to my directions, and not I to yours—you are my fellow-soldier, and not a hireling; I am, at best, your captain, not your master, in the march of industry."

The solution of the industrial problem—the abolition of all poverty that is not in itself dishonourable, the lifting of the labouring classes to the full dignity and worth of freemen, the granting to all at least the means and the opportunity for true and noble lives—is, after all, a very simple thing. A simple thing, I say, though it has not been achieved in the centuries of the past, and though it should not be achieved, alas! for many centuries to come. It is not by combinations of labour (though these are necessary and justifiable in the present distress), for this is but matching selfishness against selfishness, class against class; it is not by Government assistance to labour, it is not by any species of legislation, though these may both serve in their way; it is not by profuse charity, which often injures those who receive, and by no means always blesses those who give, as the very means for charity are often won by headlong selfishness and wrong. It is a much simpler and a much more radical remedy than any of these. It is in the reception of a new principle into the hearts of men; it is in taking the law of the social ideal and making it the law of business itself; it is in treating every man in our employ not as a tool, but as a man, and giving him the means to realise the ends of a man; it is in knowing no profit that we do not, in some measure, make common with him.

There are still other and closer bearings of the social ideal on our lives. I can only hint at them. We stand in the relation to one another of husbands and wives, of parents and children. Here, too, the instincts of self-assertion have had free play in the past; and the notion is but dawning upon us that the wife is not rightfully the servant of her husband, nor are the children merely means for the parents' ends. Though the sphere of the wife may be different, it is an equal sphere to that of her husband. As has been said,[1] she is not a satellite, but a twin star with him. And the children—though their weakness exposes them to mistreatment, all the more sacred is the obligation to bear in mind the manhood and the womanhood that are developing in them, to make them independent ends of our action and our love. But though the bearings of the principle here are being increasingly recognised, are there no others in our homes whom we still incline to regard as means merely to our own ends? Yes, there are those in our houses, if not our homes, whom we distinctly indicate by the title "servants." Do you say, Ah, but they are not ours; they are merely waiting on us; we support them, and we support them amply, and they are indeed incidentally getting a valuable training with us that will be of use to them in the future? I grant all this. I know they are not slaves; I know they may be kindly treated; I know, on their side they may be satisfied with what they have and get. But, I ask, Are *we* satisfied? Are they not human beings; have they not the ends of human beings, and can we rest till we concede them these ends? Can we rest short of a universal application of this law of the social ideal? I confess that I want no one to be my "servant," in the ordinary, one-sided use of that term. The consciousness that anyone is does not at all elate me. I like not these fawning airs, these humble looks, this punctiliousness and obsequiousness. They do not become man, or woman either; they humble me, as if I were guilty of them myself. I want no service that I do not return. I feel that if I do not honour another I do not honour myself, for I fundamentally *am* every

[1] By Professor Adler.

other: it is one common nature, wherein we all share. I am lifted with every honour, and cast down with every shame, that comes to another child of man. Am I asked, What, then, are to be the forms of our domestic life? I answer, I have no thought of forms, I have no thought even of the destruction of the present forms. I ask only for the admission of a principle into men's hearts; I only ask that it be trusted, and allowed to modify and fashion, or destroy and recreate, as it will.

Though I have traversed much ground, I have done so only to illustrate the compass and sweep of a principle. And though I have not sought to picture the social ideal, but only to indicate its principle, and test the present order of our life by it, yet if we can imagine the State, and the intercourse of the States, transfigured by it; if we can imagine business and industry transformed under its hallowing influence; if we can see our homes, and our relationship to the humblest, lit up and glorified by the free acceptance of it—we can, to the inward eye at least, dimly pre-figure what the answering reality would be. I deem it not too great a thought for the humblest man. The humblest man has that in him which will respond to it; the loneliest man may yet cherish those feelings and purposes which would fit him for membership in the ideal society; the poorest man may find existence for a moment rich in the contemplation of it; the sick man may find in it "medicine for sickness"; the dying man may feel himself growing eternal in the thought of it. For the issues of every individual existence are there; our spirits live or die, as they rise to its demands. It is, I believe, no merely human ideal, but a world-ideal, and the world-purpose is quick to own those who cleave to it.

Religion has been described by Professor Adler as the "home-sickness of the soul." In truth, it is so. There is something in us which tells us that we do not belong to a realm of jarring discords, of clashing interests, of selfish triumphs. We have another country. The home of the soul is—I know not where; it is not here. We belong to peace; we belong to love; we belong to all that is covered by the sacred name of the Good. Where are those who will assert these high belongings, and by their surrender to sovereign principle, by the sanctity with which they envelop every human being, by the new order of their lives and the peace of their spirits, prove that even here on the earth they are connected with "realms that know not earthly day"?

The trouble with the established religion is, that it has ceased to stand for ideal convictions. The Churches are friends of the established order. Morality has become a tradition. Little is now said to shame men, and to contradict their lives and the order of society with an ideal of what these should be. Who will once more lift up the standard of absolute righteousness? Who will strip morality of its conventional expressions, and rebuke sins that now go unrebuked, and make demands upon men that now they do not dream of? They who do, who see the infinite element in morality, who identify religion with justice, and make the law of the Highest the law for all life—they will be the heralds, the prophets, of the Religion of the Future.

VIII.

PERSONAL MORALITY

I.

THERE is no more wonderful or more moving thought than that of personal responsibility. It seems to go straight to the centre of our being, which is not the mind or the conscience or the heart, but the will. A voice seems to say: "To thee, individually, O Man, is given a task. Thou art not one of a mass merely: thou countest by thyself. Thou art what no one else in the world is. Thou hast a duty that no one else in the world can do. Sacred art thou in the plan of the world. Revere thyself, then, and fill out thy arc of the great circle of duty. Without thee that circle must remain for ever incomplete!"

The first lesson of personal ethics is self-reverence. Morality is sometimes resolved into sympathy and regard for others. But there is something due to ourselves as truly as to father or mother or wife or sister or friend; the same reason that exists for respecting them exists for respecting ourselves. I want no one to show signs of respect to me who does not stand on his own ground, and in his bearing and demeanour show that he has an equal sense of what is due to himself. I cannot conceive anything more lamentable than that one should think that obligation first arises when we consider the claims of others, and that in his personal and private life he may do this or that, and just as he pleases, because it concerns himself alone. He who questions that there is a duty to himself is liable to question, sooner or later, whether there be any real duty to others; for others are only human beings like himself, and if he feels no obligation to himself, why should he to them? The truth is, all are sacred—others and himself. To each one is given a task—to each one particularly and individually, as if no one else were in existence; and the task must, to a certain extent, be accomplished by each one separately and alone.

What are the things for which we are thus personally responsible; what are the things over which we ourselves have control? First, certainly, our private habits. These may be known by no one but ourselves, yet we are as responsible for them as if they were known to all the world. We are responsible, not merely because of their effect upon others, but because of their effect upon ourselves—because we ought to have pure habits, since these alone are worthy of human beings. Everyone should be watchful of himself, should take an honest pride in ruling his own impulses, in avoiding all temptations that he knows may be too strong for him, in keeping his body as well as his soul—what is unseen and what is seen—sweet and clean. Tell me, if it were possible, what a man's private and most solitary habits are, and I will tell you whether he really respects himself—whether whatever decency and respectability he has are for show, or are a part of his very fibre and make-up as a man. I have read of someone who, when alone, sat down to dinner with the same regard for form and ceremony as if he were entertaining a company of friends. His instinct, at least, was right; for whatever measure of form and ceremony is proper on such an occasion is so because human beings sit down to the table, and not because of their number. All our private habits should reveal our sense of what is due to the humanity in us. Therefore we should not drink to excess or eat to excess, for this is brutish; therefore we should control all our

appetites—otherwise there is the abdication of the reason, which makes the truly human part of us; therefore the body should be treated with reverence because it is the abode and tabernacle of our humanity; therefore, neglect of the person and slovenliness are disgusting, because they reveal the lack of a sense of what is becoming to a man. By every unchaste act, by every surrender of reason to passion, by all excess and by all meanness in our manner of life, by neglect of the body as well as neglect of the soul, the fair humanity that is in us and ought to be reflected in our person and behaviour is dishonoured; we sink to the level of the animal instead of rising to the stature of the man.

Another field wherein we alone have control is that of our personal aims in life. An aim is nowise set save by the person whose aim it is. An aim is simply the direction of our own will. A good aim cannot be given to a man save by himself. He may hear of it, but it is not his own till he makes it so. Our outward acts may be constrained, they may not express us; but the will is the centre and citadel of our personality, and no power in heaven or in earth is master there but ourselves. With this magnificent power we can choose higher or lower aims, we can direct the channel of our life in this or that direction; or, if we will, we can refuse to aim at anything at all, and simply drift, and become waifs and ignoble wanderers on the earth. Now, any aim is better than none; but the highest aim is alone worthy of a man. What is the highest aim? I will venture to reply that it is to contribute to an ideal order of human life. The other answers commonly given are either ignoble or unreal to us. To save one's soul—who of us can consider that the noblest aim we can have? To glorify God and enjoy him for ever—how far away and unreal and unpractical does that seem to us! To seek the kingdom of God—ah! but what is the kingdom of God? To do the will of God; but who will tell us what the will of God means? for that sanction has, in the course of man's religious history, covered almost every conceivable aim of man, high and low, devilish and divine. But to contribute to an ideal order of human life seems to me an aim that man can lay hold of; and it is an exalted aim. For we love this human life of ours, and wish to see it lifted to its ideal. We love it most truly, not for what it is, but for what it may be. We are in love with its ideal. The aim I have proposed is legitimate for the merchant, for the lawyer, for the physician, for the mother, for the child, for the working man. One may accomplish little, yet he can have the aim; and the aim is that for which alone we are responsible, and may give significance to our smallest actions and a priceless value even to our ineffectual strivings.

Once in a while we need to turn back on these busy lives of ours, and ask how far this aim is really regulative of them. Are the actions we are doing, the sort of lives we are leading, tending towards an ideal form of human life; are they such as, if they were general in the community, would bring that ideal form of life nearer to the earth? Let the merchant ask himself what are the customs, the maxims of his trade; and if they are not what they should be, is he by consenting to them helping to perpetuate them, or is he striving to change them? Let the lawyer and the physician ask themselves as to the morality of their professions, and whether the supreme aim is keeping them from aught that is dishonourable, and constraining them to seek to elevate the tone and practice of their professions in every possible way. Let the mother ask herself: "Am I training my child so that it will be a new factor in the world, or merely a perpetuator of old-time prejudices and hatreds and shams?" Let the child too have its solemn hour, when it shall nurse its growing soul on deeds of heroism and faithfulness, and ask itself whether it too could venture for an idea, and be patient under adversity and the world's contempt.

Let the working man ask himself: "What is my motive; and would it, if it were general, tend to an ideal form of life? Do I work merely for hire, or do I take pride in a piece of honest, thorough work? In my demand for changes, perhaps revolutions, in the industrial world, am I actuated by the spirit of malice and revenge or by the simple thought of justice?" Yes, even the unemployed working man may feel the pressure of that supreme aim upon him, and, in his sorest misfortune, may will to commit no crime, and, though he be insulted, not to insult again, and to bear even to the death rather than do a wrong to others. Everywhere does this supreme aim hold good; everywhere may it take from the pride of those who are great, and give dignity to those who are humble. How quickly does it recall us from those aims in which it is so easy to settle down! To earn a comfortable living, and provide for wife and children—how many seem to have this practically as their aim in life! But there is nothing peculiarly human about this; beavers and the whole tribe of animals do the same. Man has intelligence, has imagination, has a moral nature, has dreams of universal justice; yet sometimes he forgets the dignity and glory that belong to him, turns his back on his dreams, perverts his conscience, loses his imagination, and uses his god-like intelligence only so far as to provide for himself a comfortable living, perhaps in his selfishness and hardness leaving even wife and children out. O Friend, lift up thy thoughts! think of what thou art called to be! Light up thy heart, thy imagination, and thy life with a great aim! Do it, because with all thy hoarding and saving thou art wasting thyself, becoming little while thou shouldst be becoming great, growing old while thou shouldst be keeping ever young, turning life into a game of profit and loss, while it should be an opportunity for all noble action and the service of all good causes!

The old religion contains a subtle word—"Thou must be born again." Strange and unmeaning to us as is the theological dogma that has been based upon it, it hides a vital truth. 'Tis not the mending of our actions that is first needed; 'tis not the forming of this or that habit; 'tis not any outward change. It is the renovation of the fountains of our life; it is the making victorious a new aim in life; it is the changing our thoughts and experiencing the transforming power of a new purpose. This does not alone help us in one particular, but in all; it involves an advance along the whole line of duty. And the difference from the old religion is simply that, while it seems to say that such a purpose must come from God, we say that it must be formed by ourselves. We do not fall on our knees and pray; we arise, and summon our energies, and resolve. And though the old nature in us may not yield at once, though old faults may persist and old habits be stubborn, yet we can gradually win the victory over them; and our connection with that Supreme Power which upholds the world and supports the human soul is simply in the belief that he is behind us and beneath us and above us, and pours his all-mightiness into us, so that we can ourselves do all that in our nature we are summoned to do.

Not only the supreme dominant aim of our lives, but our motives in all our actions, are under our control; and for purifying them we are responsible. It is here that the ethics based entirely on the results of our actions altogether fails. An action may have exactly the same results, yet at one time have moral worth, and at another have none. A dollar given to a poor man will go just so far, provide so much bread, whether given to rid one's self of his presence or out of love for the man. But an act of the former sort is not a moral act at all. It is wonderful how completely our moral value is hidden from all the world but ourselves, and yet how in importance it transcends all else we can think of. I would not ignore the question of results in the theory of ethics. Our acts must

not only be moral—they must be right, they must correspond with an objective standard; and with the determination of that the results of our actions have a great deal to do. An action is right which tends to the good of humanity, the results of which are actually beneficial to humanity. A moral action is one that, in addition, *aims* at the good of humanity. It is not enough to be perfectly righteous—we must *mean* to be righteous; and in our so meaning, wanting, purposing, our whole moral worth consists. The real life of man is not the seen, but the unseen one; what we see are but effects—the causes are hidden away. The world is satisfied with a certain decorousness, and we ourselves all too easily incline to take the world's standard; but in our graver moments we know what a surface thing it is, and that our unclean thoughts, our jealousies, our envies and spites, and all our littlenesses and uncharitablenesses, though no one else knows of them, are the things that defile us. Oh for a clean heart! Oh to be holy within!—to be as pure in our own eyes as we would be in the eyes of the world without! Oh to banish all selfishness, and to look on others only with love!—so that if we chide or are severe towards them it shall not be in anger; so that if they wrong us we shall not hate them, and if we are injured we shall not injure again. The highest care, after all, of each one should be for himself, and for that which is most personal to himself. There, in that inner realm, no one else can help him. Each morning, I conceive, a man might well arise, and say: "This day I welcome to my heart all good thoughts, and will that they should prompt and guide all my action. I banish hate, I banish spite, I banish all low cunning and greed; and I will not let a word escape my lips, or an act be done, that truth and honour and love cannot sanction!" It is easier, I know, to control our actions than our motives. It takes great watchfulness, it may involve a long discipline, and mean many a struggle to be able to banish an unworthy thought as soon as it appears, to check an unholy impulse as soon as it arises. It implies that we have ourselves well in hand, that the will is strong. Ah! but this is our task, this is that to which we are called. There were no honour in easy victories. To contend against odds, to hold to the fight after defeat once and twice; yes, though the body is weak and the heart is faint, to keep the purpose strong, there is glory in that; and into the secrets of such a strife the angels might well look with wonder and awe. 'Twas Hesiod of old who said that before the temple of virtue the immortal gods had placed *labour*, and the way to it was long and steep. 'Tis hard to know, indeed, what good thing in life is to be had for the asking. The whole significance of our being is that we are made imperfect, and called to be perfect.

"And, oh, if Nature sinks, as oft she may,
'Neath long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
Still in the soul to admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness;
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard."

It is wonderful how every great religious movement in the past has been marked by a new sense of the need of personal righteousness. 'Twas thus when real religion arose among the ancient Hebrews, and a cry went forth from the prophetic lips, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me!" 'Twas so when Jesus called for a deeper righteousness than even the most religious of his own day practised. 'Twas so when Luther threw off the bondage of dead works, and wrote and spoke to the conscience, and said that an act in itself good becomes sinful if its motive is sinful. If I ever have a doubt of the possibility of a religion arising out of Liberalism to-day, it is because Liberalism speaks more of the rights of men than of their duties; because it talks more of the reform of society than of the reform of ourselves; because its ideal is philanthropy rather than justice; because it forgets that "society gains

nothing," as Emerson says, "while a man not himself renovated attempts to renovate things about him," or, as John C. Learned says, that those "who are in the wrong cannot cure evils." Let us purify ourselves; let us leave the world's standards behind us, and ask what manner of men we ourselves are; and if we find ourselves unholy, unchaste, passionate, envious, ready to take advantage, petty in spirit, and narrow in sympathy, oh, let us leave doctoring the ills of the world, and first cure ourselves!

But life is not all in doing. Duty is not all in striving and battling—it is sometimes in waiting, in enduring, in bearing what we cannot remove. Perhaps our sharpest battles are with our impatience, and with what seems a cruel fate that assigns us burdens heavier than we can bear. Sympathy often we cannot receive; often, we cannot tell our griefs. The tragedies of our life are in secret, and this is what makes them tragedies.

I allow myself to believe, however, that nothing is given us in life greater than we can bear. It may seem as if the adversity were too sore, but we can endure it. We cannot always control our bodily health, but we can our spirits. We can bear the death of friends; we can bear the ingratitude of friends, or their unfaithfulness; we can bear to have our hopes defeated; we can bear to have light and joy vanish out of our skies—bear it without bitterness, bear it with magnanimity. The deep purpose of our being does not lie in anything that can be taken from us. 'Tis not in our prosperity, and it may be accomplished in spite of adversity; 'tis not in the relationships of home, in tender companionship with friends, in public honour or regard. Thy worth, O fellow man or woman, is in thyself—in thy patient soul, in thine incorruptible will, in thy readiness to accept whatever post the universe assigns thee, in thy quiet faithfulness there, whether amid sunshine or the dark, amid joy or sorrow. We know not any more than Socrates what we ought to wish for ourselves; we know not, in truth, what is best for us; we know not what will bring out that which is most truly divine and godlike within us. The lamented Garfield said we could not know anyone perfectly well "while he was in perfect health; and as the ebb-tide discloses the real lines of the shore and the bed of the sea, so feebleness, sickness, and pain bring out the real character of a man." Matthew Arnold says of a friend:—

"I saw him sensitive in frame,
I knew his spirits low,
And wished him health, success, and fame—
I do not wish it now.

"For these are all their own reward,
And leave no good behind:
They try us—oftenest make us hard,
Less modest, pure, and kind."

Emerson even says: "Adversity is the prosperity of the great"; and if this seems strained, we do not feel it so when we see some heroic man or woman bearing up under great ills with godlike equanimity and patience. O Friend, think not thyself off the track of destiny because things are awry, and fortune does not smile upon thee, and thou hast not, perhaps, a thing that thou cravest! think not that the World Spirit has not any path marked out for thee to follow! The path of duty is still the predestined path; and though it be no longer to do, but to bear, bear but as bravely as thou wouldst do, and never was there better soldier of duty than thou!

II.

THE field of our thoughts is a wide one; the field of our actions is ordinarily a narrow one. Ethics covers both. It asks that we have just thoughts, true thoughts, everywhere; it gives the ideal also for each day's smallest and, as it may seem, most insignificant actions. The real world to most of us is not at all large; it is so near and commonplace that we are apt to slight it. Our real world, that which we daily see and are acting in the midst of almost constantly, is made up of those in our own household, of a few friends, and of a few

more acquaintances, and of ourselves. Yet it is here that our actions tell, and here that our responsibility centres.

The home lies closest about us. How tender we should be there! What solace ought every member of that intimate circle to find there! If in the world without we feel that we are misunderstood and misjudged, how should the fret and depression that come from it vanish and dissipate as we return to that loving, genial atmosphere, and to those generous hearts who take us at our best, and by trusting us tend to keep us so! What opportunity equals that of parents towards their children, that of elder brothers or sisters towards the younger? With what ample consideration should we treat those who are not so strong as others, not so bright in mind, or who have some failing that causes the world to look down upon them, and the sense of which brings to themselves at times confusion and mortification! How watchful we should be about hurting them! How we should strive to keep in them something of that self-respect which is the basis of all the virtues! What is more pitiable than a child ignored or contemptuously treated at home? Yet, strangely enough, those who are brought nearest to us, and for whom we can do most, we sometimes treat the most coolly, and for them do the least. Many a man who is courtesy itself to other women comes to show little to his wife; many a son who has great deference for men in general, shows little before his own father; many a young woman who has ample consideration for the failings of her sex is yet impatient and ungenerous towards her own sisters. Oh that we might learn that our nearest duties are the highest; that we might think more and more tenderly of those whom we daily and, perhaps, hourly see; that we might keep our reverence for them; that we might bear with them, and always have the will to do them good! Father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister; thou wilt never know any as precious as these; none who have such a right to thy love; none for whom thou wilt ever have a right to do so much!

Nothing more befits a man in his intercourse with his acquaintances than magnanimity—a certain largeness of temper and soul. It might be almost called the courtesy due to human nature as such to be generous towards it. Men are so constituted that, if we think evil of them, we are apt to find some evil, and if we look for what is good we find the good instead.

Magnanimity means looking for the good, expecting it, not being willing to allow the contrary till we are forced to. It means, where there are two interpretations of a man's conduct possible, the being inclined to take the more generous one; not out of charity, but because of an instinct of breadth and liberality. Magnanimity is ordinarily thought to consist in overlooking injuries, but I should say it was more truly shown in unwillingness to credit them. Sometimes we are like the boys who put chips on their shoulders and dare some one to knock them off; and then injuries come to us that are never meant to be injuries, that exist only in our active imagination and our suspicious minds. "Trifles light as air," says Shakespeare, "are to the jealous confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ"; but to the magnanimous they are like those discords of which George Eliot speaks, that, "quenched by meeting harmonies, die in the large and charitable air." I have seen misunderstandings arise between persons who I am sure meant no ill to one another, yet, simply because each was jealous of his own rights and suspicious that the other was willing to wrong him, involved themselves in grave and sad complications; and I have thought that the way out of the difficulty was not in finding how far each was right and each was wrong, but in the gaining by both of a larger and nobler temper. I see no way to go along smoothly in the world without an habitual large-mindedness. There are so many "touchy" persons,

to use a colloquial phrase, who are making others uncomfortable all the time, and, what is quite as bad, making themselves uncomfortable too. They are on the watch, as it were, lest some one trespass on their rights; they constantly misinterpret others, and come to wear often a gently injured air, which would be amusing were it not so annoying. All this is the opposite of magnanimity. A magnanimous man never doubts that others will respect him. He is impatient with those who magnify trifles; he is conscious of rectitude in himself, and believes in it in others in spite of a few appearances to the contrary.

And what an occasion for magnanimity arises in the little differences of opinion, in the discussions between friends and acquaintances, that often arise! How profitless many of our discussions are, because we persist in keeping our own point of view, and do not even try to understand what the other person really means! How we are apt to seize upon some trifling mistake, to magnify some petty error, and overlook the drift and tenour of the differing opinion as a whole! What a change it would be if, neglecting these minor blemishes, we seized upon the main idea of the person with whom we are conversing, and sought to do justice to it, and to understand it! Surely, one has little confidence in the truth of his own view who is not willing for a moment to entertain a different one. A discussion never should degenerate into a dispute; if ill-will arises, there should be an end of it. Bigotry can never be conquered by bigotry. Bigotry can only be conquered by candour, and by a noble breadth of view that will make even the idea of the bigot swim in a sea of larger thought. Let Liberals not harbour narrow prejudices against those of Jewish or Christian faith. Let us be willing to consider all the truth there is in the old religions, all the services they have rendered mankind, all the uses to which their nobler adherents are still putting them in the world. And let us do this not grudgingly, or as if we were conceding something, but with a truth-loving spirit; and this spirit will perchance pass to those with whom we converse, and lead them to deal with us in a fairer temper. The test of any set of views is, after all, to what extent open, candid, truth-loving minds can hold them. The best argument in our favour lies in the noble temper we at all times show, in our aversion to all the tricks by which the passions and prejudices of men are stirred, in our magnanimity to friend and foe alike.

Another disposition, upon which the smoothing and sweetening of our daily life much depends, is thoughtfulness about little things. There is much conceit and nonsense about what makes the gentleman or lady. One essential mark of such persons, I should say, is mindfulness of little attentions, the habit of rendering little kindnesses of which the ordinary, grosser man or woman scarcely thinks. The root of courtesy, after self-respect, is in a fine sympathy with others. We widely err in thinking that great things are necessary to make us happy. A woman does not ask much from her husband, but she asks his love—and this shown in numberless, trifling ways. You do not count on great favours from your friend; but a little, done with real friendship, goes a long way with you. I verily believe that the happiness of most of us, so far as others are concerned, depends more on their manner, their look, their voice, their evident friendliness for us, than upon anything they can do for us. I believe that nothing so contributes to the evenness and serenity and cheerfulness of our own minds as the habit of saying pleasant words, rendering little attentions, and doing little insignificant services which we should be ashamed to speak of, after they are done. "Small service is true service while it lasts," says Wordsworth: yes, if we put love into it. It is these small services that bind friends, that keep the love of lovers fresh. They are

the flower of courtesy; they go to make up what the same poet calls

"That best portion of a good man's life—
His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

Many persons are oppressed with the littleness of their lives; they would like to be doing great things, and the petty duties of each day take up all their time. They do not recollect that faithfulness is the first and highest thing required of us, that this may be shown in little things as well as in great, and that the commonest lot may be transfigured by the love, the patience, and the sweetness we put into it. What is, after all, wanted most in the world is not great persons fitted for great occasions, or ordinary ones fitted for the ordinary, but great persons who will throw their greatness into the ordinary; who will show how much dignity, how much goodness, how much sweetness, may characterise the life of every day; whose minds are conversant with principles that their most private actions exemplify; whose very "good morning" makes us glad, and whose "good-bye" seems like a benediction; whose daily look mirrors a heaven of love, of self-renouncement, and of peace. Ah, friend, fight the battle in thy obscure corner of life—fight the battle with thyself, thy restlessness, thy fears, and accept thy lot! Thou canst not choose thy task, perhaps, but thou canst "choose to do it well." Thou canst not do what thou wouldst, yet thou canst do bravely what thou must. Do it! for the deepest law of human life is faithfulness, and by obeying it thou dost acquire a worth that life itself cannot exhaust and death cannot destroy. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," said Jesus. A great saying, for it upsets the measurements of the world and of our worldly morality. It is enough to endear him to the hearts of men, for it shows that he looked upon the heart, and judged men by what they were, and not by what they could do.

Another virtue much needed in our daily intercourse with others is readiness to own a fault. The whole virtue is in our readiness—in being quick to own we have been in the wrong. We do not like, of course, to shame ourselves, not only before others, but in our own eyes. Nothing is more unwelcome. Therefore there are few more genuine moral experiences than those of confessing a fault, provided it be spontaneous, and we are not driven or compelled to it. We separate ourselves in such an act from what we ought to be, and feel the "ought to be" as above us, and, as it were, condemning us. It is sensitiveness we need to have. Most persons know when they do wrong, but they do not rue it, they do not grieve over it, they do not confess it—if they confess at all—until the feelings of contrition have lost their warmth, and the confession half its virtue. It is an affecting passage of Scripture: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Each blessed day in this life of ours makes a kind of whole, and no evil should be done in it that is not repented of before its close. For who will allow that confession is only a childish virtue—or, if it were, would not ask that he might keep the child's heart and the child's habit, and even if it be before some sainted spirit of the dead, or before Jesus, or before some image of the highest, which seems to bend over and listen to him, might pour out his sorrow and his shame rather than not have any sorrow and shame at all? But the man's habit should differ from the child's only in that, while the child confesses to a father or mother, the man should confess to himself. The dignity of man is that he is both the doer and the judge of his actions. The child could not humble itself before the parent did not the parent voice the dormant conscience of the child. The man only reaches the true stature of a man when his conscience becomes awake and alive.

"Sits there no judge in heaven, our sin to see?
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey."

Is this impossible? No; an unwelcome, a difficult task it may be to sit in judgment on ourselves, but not impossible. I believe a man can be as vigilant over himself as ever God or angel could be. I believe he may be as impartial towards himself, as high in his demands, and as sure in his condemnations. There is a God in every man, and it is for us to let him speak, and to hear him; and not till we do this is the true aim of our being carried out.

IX.

NON-CHRISTIAN TEACHERS AND JESUS: WHOM SHALL WE FOLLOW?[1]

We have been brought up in a religious tradition which looks with a kind of disdain upon a large part of human kind. The ancient Jews thought they were a peculiar people. Christianity thinks it is a peculiar religion. The feeling has a certain basis in both cases—almost all pride has some superiority behind it; yet it may as well be admitted that the feeling is pride, and that, like all pride, it involves a certain amount of blindness and of injustice. The Greeks had a similar feeling when they called the rest of the world barbarians. As matter of fact, there was civilisation in Egypt and in China before the Greeks were heard of. So beyond the people of Israel and outside the world of Christianity there have been those who witnessed for the higher truths on which the souls of men and nations live.

Speaking for myself, there has been a kind of pleasure in going out beyond the bounds within which we of Jewish and Christian birth ordinarily confine ourselves. It is the sort of pleasure one has in going to foreign lands or into strange cities—the world is bigger thereafter; our souls are enlarged. We unlearn our provincialism and that is the trouble with the ordinary Jew or the ordinary Christian now; he is a provincial—not a citizen of the wide world.

The man who has the consciousness of allies in his efforts towards the good in China, in India, in Greece, has far more ground for hope than he whose whole faith is based on what was said or done in Palestine. The broader the base of our pyramid, the higher it can rise—and be at the same time secure.

This does not mean that all the higher voices are alike, but that they are all higher voices, that now in one way and now in another they open out paths of advance for man and beckon him on. Perhaps only at bottom is all religion one—namely, as a sense of ideal things, a craving for something which man has not and yet would have. It is a part of the process by which man expands—by which he rises to a larger quantity and a higher quality of being. Those who are contented are never religious. It is those who are ill at ease, those who see something wrong, those who have a pitiful sense of what is lacking in the world, that have the spur to ideal effort. Yet one person may see one thing wrong or awry, and another another; and one

[1] This address followed a series on "Great Teachers Outside Christianity"—the subjects being Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, and Marcus Aurelius. The addresses were given before the Society for Ethical Culture of Chicago, December, 1901–January, 1902.

person may devise one way of surmounting the evil, and another another; and so various types of ideal effort or religion may arise. They are alike in leading man upward and onward; they differ in the direction they take and in the means or way. They are like men climbing a mountain from different approaches; they resemble one another only in that they climb. Or, they are like pilgrims travelling from many lands towards a sacred shrine—their routes are different and their means of transportation are different; they are alike only in that, whether from the east or the west, from the north or the south, whether over seas or over the land, they move towards one goal.

Perhaps, in this manner of speaking, you already anticipate my answer to the question: "Non-Christian teachers and Jesus: whom shall we follow?" I do not attempt a special address on Jesus. I have spoken of him at different times in the past. Recently a vivid and realistic portrait of him has been drawn by a recognised authority on Biblical subjects.[1] I must take for granted that his main ideas are understood by those in the habit of coming here. Jesus is among the prophets and social dreamers of the race. The kingdom of heaven which he announced as near at hand was a social ideal. It meant a righteous order of human life on the earth—one in which those crushed in the ruthless, competitive struggles of society would have a chance. It was to be a day of recompense for the sorrows and sufferings and inequalities of the world. The valleys should be exalted and the mountains made low. Jesus continued the strains of the Hebrew prophets. His difference was that that which they longed to see he said was at hand. He took an affirmative tone. He inspired wondrous hope. He founded a movement. He created a Church. And yet there was a very vital difference from any political or social movement such as might arise from a similar impulse now. Jesus looked for nothing from the State; He expected nothing from laws or changes in laws. Rather did he anticipate opposition from the State—he spoke of persecution and prison and death which his followers might have to face. His movement was to rise in a hostile world. Moreover, the new society which Jesus announced was an intensely moral one—I mean that he did not have in mind any mere external order, but one in which the hearts of men would be changed, in which not only justice would be done, but men would be just—yes, in which love and brotherliness would surpass all that ordinary justice demanded. Precedent to admission to his movement was confession of sin, and repentance—his Church was to consist of those born again into a new life and dedicated to it. This interior character, this sense of a needed revolution in the heart and life, of a call to be perfect, pure, and holy in the springs of one's being, is what takes the movement of Jesus into the realm of religion, rather than of social reform, with which otherwise it has much in common. For such a new and righteous order, an order of which love should be the law and in which love should be the impulse too, Jesus believed the earth was destined. The struggles with the old disorder, with selfishness and cunning and might, would not last for ever. A hand mightier than man, mightier than the State—a hand from out the unseen—would intervene and lay low the powers of evil. The earth would be purged—the goodly wheat would be garnered, the chaff and the stubble burned up and destroyed. Then would the earth itself be transformed: no longer should there be death or dying; no longer should there be mourning or crying or pain—all things would become new; the heavens would be new, the earth would be new—the dream of a perfect society, of a perfect world, would come true.

Such was the substance of the thought

[1] Professor Nathaniel Schmidt, of Cornell University.

of Jesus. In his own person he experienced the hostility of the existing religious and political order. He was put to death after a career of only two or three years, faring differently from Confucius, Buddha, or Socrates, each of whom continued his activity till a ripe old age. The very pathos of his early death touched the hearts of his followers to an unusual degree, and won for him a pitying, adoring love such as history hardly gives another example of.

Christians find it self-evident that we should follow Jesus—and I can never bring up the thought of him myself without an act of reverence; I have more in common with those who worship him than with those who defame him or make light of him. And yet as for taking him as one's sole master—it is, for those who sympathise with the thought and attitude of to-day, impossible.

And I think we have to say the same of all the teachers I have been considering. None of them quite gives the rounded whole of an ideal of life such as we seek. Men who live in the light of to-day cannot throw themselves at the feet of yesterday—great as are the figures that loom up there. Few have stated the attitude which I think we must take more impressively than Walt Whitman. Referring to the "old times," the "great masters," he says:—

"I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left wafted hither,
I have perused it, own it is admirable (moving awhile among it),
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves,
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it, I stand in my place with my own day here."

Infinite receptivity, infinite appreciation, yet remembering that we have our own situation, our own tasks, our own minds now—that is the true attitude; "into the Future fuse the Past, and the world's flowing fates in our own mould recast"—that is our duty. Some think, for whom the Christian dogmas have dissolved, that we can be Buddhists: we can no more be Buddhists than we can be Christians—*i.e.*, in the historic, exclusive sense of those words.

Let us briefly see the deficiencies in each of the movements referred to, and then try to bring together the positive elements of truth, the lasting principles, which each set of teachings contains, and to mould them, in connection with the thought of to-day, into a higher unity.

First, Confucius. The deficiency is not so much in anything he taught—though he did not rise to the level of Marcus Aurelius and of Jesus with respect to the treatment of injuries—as in the fact that his teachings are not lit up with hope and a forward-looking prospect. Somehow Confucius's eyes were turned mainly to the past. There, we are made to feel as we read his words, are the great examples of wise kings and happy states. But there is a kind of fatality for any people in putting its "golden age" behind it. It need not affect the insight—that may even be perfect—but it does somehow the mood and temper, what the Germans call the "Stimmung," of a people. There is something else beyond knowledge, or even earnestness, in the world; buoyancy, cheer, what the French call "élan," enthusiasm, are important factors. The misfortune of the Chinese people is that they are retrospective, and Confucius did not rise above the national habit. This conduces to calmness, to wisdom, to stability, but it is hardly a spring of progress. Your eyes can scarcely look longingly backward and forward at the same time. China is an illustration of the peril of making an advance and then stopping. It is like a man who, once having done a good thing, thinks with so much satisfaction of it that he does little or nothing more. At a very early period China attained a relatively high stage of civilisation, and was blessed with rulers who were almost sages as well. Let me speak of but one thing. The importance of the family as a unit in society was strongly felt. "Honour thy father and mother" is one of the

great commandments of Chinese morality. But yet there may come great crises in social development when this cannot be taken as an absolute law. There may be situations in which a higher allegiance is called for than that to father and mother. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Superficial critics charge it against Jesus that he thus made light of family ties. But if father and mother are to bind us when causes beyond their appreciation or understanding appeal to us, how can advances be made? Filial reverence makes for stability in society, and in all ordinary cases is a duty; but if it is an absolute duty, it means social stagnation. When the past rules the present, then the present cannot go beyond the past. Confucius, as I have said, shared the national limitations. So extraordinary was his misjudgment of things on this account that he set most store by a book of historical annals that he wrote—saying that by this he should be known and by this be condemned—a record of the past purely, and a dry record at that. It is important that we know the past, important for every people; but it is the thought of the future that gives high inspiration—it is the daring spirit that is ready to venture on new paths that is the parent of enthusiasm. Yes, we do not get at the real secret of the triumphs of the past, save as we are ready to go beyond them. As Wendell Phillips put it, to be as good as our fathers we have to be better. If we do not go beyond them, we all too easily fall behind them. The lack of a sense of this, the lack of horizon, the lack of a daring forward look, is the deficiency of Confucius and Confucianism.

Second, Buddha. Buddha's view of life is a strange one to us—so strange that I had to spend the greater part of my address on him in trying simply to make it credible. On account of the change, the impermanence, the insubstantiality in life—health passing into sickness, pleasure into pain, youth into old age, life into death—Buddha sought to wean men from the love of life, from the craving for pleasure—to detach them, to cut them loose, so that all these things, sickness, pain, life and death, existence and non-existence, should be as nothing to them, and they rise into an exalted state of calm, even of bliss and rapture, to which the name "Nirvana" was given. There is a profound truth here—Buddhism is a magnificent assertion of the power of the human spirit over the impulses and cravings that are usually thought to be essential to it; and yet the lurking one-sidedness and deficiency become manifest as we contemplate the practical working of the religion which Buddha founded. For the Buddhist disciple proper—I do not speak of those who do not take the strict obligations of the religion—is a mendicant; he lives on the gratuitous gifts of others. Ordinarily—and having in mind the Eastern world in which Buddhism had its birth—the Bhikku (or mendicant) takes his bowl of a morning and quietly goes from house to house, uttering a pious wish on behalf of the giver if something is put into it, and if not passing silently on. It is a life without care, without the distractions and pre-occupations that most men have—a life favourable to that disentanglement from earthly things which makes the Buddhist ideal. For most of us to be homeless, propertyless, dependent on the goodwill of others, would seem a lot hard, forlorn, and scarcely consistent with self-respect; to the Buddhist there is a kind of joy in the very freedom of it—it is the beginning of his emancipation. "In high joy we live, without striving and grasping among the striving and grasping." "In high joy we live, calling nothing our own—we are like the bright gods who feed on happiness"—such are ancient exclamations of Buddhist happiness. And yet, if we stop to think, what does the Buddhist manner of life imply? Evidently, a more or less orderly state of industrial society, in which at least the necessary means of

life are provided. The Bhikku goes from house to house and gets the sustenance that he has not himself produced. His life could not be without that other life from which he seeks to be emancipated. If all men should rise to the Buddhist ideal, sustenance for man, save fruits or roots—and they might need plucking and digging—would fail, and Buddhism or any other religious theory would perish of inanition. It is not noble, and it is hardly honest, to place in low esteem that which we really need—whether it be things or people. The Buddhist must, then, admit the significance of the material pursuits of men after all. Sowing and reaping, ploughing, digging, even striving and grasping and buying and selling and protecting and ruling (in any stage of society short of communism)—in brief, the whole of industrial and civil society, acquire a certain relative necessity and justification; they must be justified, and men engaged in them must be capable of being sanctified, if there is to be a plan of salvation broad enough to embrace all mankind. The Buddhist ideal is, then, a partial thing. The Buddhist seeks to take himself out of the struggling, striving world, and yet is supported by it. Instead of trying to give a more orderly and reasonable and beneficent form to the industrial and political efforts of men, he turns away from them.

Third, Socrates. The deficiency of Socrates appears in the fact that he is not properly to be classed among religious founders at all. He represents rather the search for truth than any settled doctrine—much less any propagation of it, or establishing of a religious community or Church. Individually, morally, Socrates attracts an unlimited admiration; and he communicates to us powerful impulses—no one can be quite the same after he has read and studied him (as portrayed by Xenophon and Plato)—but the impulses are to think, to define, to know, and to know what we know and distinguish it from what we do not know, and as we know to live as we know, but not in the direction of any one theory of life or any one mode of life. Socrates represents the free life of the intellect. But the intellect is not the whole of man, and sometimes men can be more occupied in analysing and defining the good than they are in practising it. The intellect, too, must ever lead to the truth—its search must yield us something; yet, when truth is found, when it stands out clear, then comes the work of religion in organising it into life, in inspiring men and communities to shape their conduct and their institutions after its image. Socrates is rather an inspirer than a teacher, and his inspiration is greatest in times of transition, when old ideas are breaking up and men are hazy and inclined to be two things at once, or when new ideas are formulating themselves and in need of criticism and the clearest possible statement. But when we are craving definite truths, when we want an outcome of human searchings, when we ask what is the world then, and what is my life, and what is my duty, Socrates hardly pretends to answer: though he offers some things tentatively, he mainly says, Search yourselves, know what you know and distinguish it from what you do not know; and be very sure that you are not deceived. This is not to make light of his great service, but only to say that it is not the only kind of service of which man stands in need.

Marcus Aurelius, on the other hand, has a body of ideas. The intellectual quest which Socrates started or inspired has reached a very tangible result. And a noble body of doctrine it is—I can hardly conceive of a nobler treasure-house of living, practical ideas than those jottings in camp or court that are familiarly known to the world as his *Meditations*. They show the full soul and heart of the man. And yet, with all that is profound and beautiful and affecting, there is something lacking in Marcus Aurelius. He gives us very large views, and he makes us very tender of our kind

—I think one who took to heart what he says would be as good as if he had read almost anything from Jesus or from Paul; and yet somehow there is an air of sadness about him. And when I analyse this and look for its causes, they seem to me to lie in the conception of the universe which he had formed, according to which, while there was a continuous round of changes in the world, there was really no progress. Let me quote a passage or two: "He who has seen present things has seen all, both everything which has taken place from all eternity, and everything which will be for time without end, for all are of one kin and of one form."[1] Again: "Those who come after us will see nothing new ......but in a manner he who is forty years old, if he has any understanding at all, has seen, by virtue of the uniformity that prevails, all things which have been and all that will be."[2] It was such a conception, it seems to me, that cast a kind of shadow over this beautiful spirit —perhaps, all unconsciously to himself. There is an air of resignation in his pages rather than of joy and of faith. There is no presentiment of a transfigured world, such as lights up the pages of the New Testament, and, indeed, dawns in the prophecies of the Old. The universe is not hastening on to some grand event, human history is not moving towards some sublime climax, as in the conception of Jesus; but instead he might almost have said with the author of Ecclesiastes: "All things are full of weariness......that which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." The deficiency of Marcus Aurelius resembles that of Confucius—only it is not from retrospection and conservatism, but from a certain philosophic conception of the whole system of things. We do not get hope and daring faith from his pages; though his views are almost a religion, it is not

[1] vi. 37. [2] xi. 1.

a religion that can satisfy those who have been touched with the Christian (and old prophetic) spirit, whose souls have leaped with the prospect of great and sublime things to be.

However much, then, we honour and revere the great teachers whom I have been considering, I see not how we can be unquestioning followers of any of them. And I must say the same of Jesus. The deficiency of Jesus lies in the lack of a scientific sense of cause and effect. He puts a sublime goal before the race, he interprets history and life as a movement thitherward; but he thinks we are to attain the goal at last by a sort of leap, by a sort of Divine *tour-de-force;* and this was just because he was without the scientific habits of thought that he might have learned of a Socrates, a Plato, or an Aristotle. The home of science is not Palestine, but Greece. And our Palestinian religion has ever suffered from this lack. Witness the descriptions of the coming of the kingdom of heaven by Jesus and by Paul. "The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"—so Jesus is reported to have said.[1] And now Paul: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with him be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."[2] It is all sheer miracle.

[1] Matthew xxiv. 29–31. There are many passages of the same tenour.
[2] 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, 17.

But for the augustness and sacredness of the subject, it might be taken as a transformation scene from a fairy-tale. Things do not happen in this way in the real world. There may be changes in the future as there have been in the past. Think of the evolution of our earth from the fiery mist, think of the dawn of life, of the origin of man, of the evolution of great states! What prodigious developments, yet all gradual, silent, natural. There may be prodigious developments in the future; we cannot tell what shall be: we may hope for the highest; this mortal may even put on immortality; but we must suppose that all future changes will be gradual, silent, natural, too. The scientific point of view is lacking in Jesus; he looks to supernatural agencies to accomplish what must come from the working of the natural, inborn forces of nature and of man. It is accordingly an entire change of attitude towards the great social ideal which scientific thought requires. Prayer goes with the old attitude—prayer and waiting; creative work is the demand of the new.

In what I have been saying I have already anticipated the positive constructive ideas which these various teachers of the past have bequeathed to us. From far-away China we learn that the great practical task for man is political and social transformation, based on a rectification of the thoughts and of the hearts of men—only the standard and the ideal are too much taken from the past. From India we learn to rise above the love of self, above the love of pleasure, even above the love of life; we learn how to master those passions, those lusts, those cleavings and insistences that are at the root of so much of the disorder, the wrongs, the oppressions of the world; we learn how to keep our souls in a state of peace and of love to all our kind; only with Buddha this leads to a withdrawal from the active world, instead of to an attempt to interpenetrate it with a diviner spirit and to reorganise it. From Greece we learn the lesson of the duty of thinking, of the significance of the intellectual life; and whenever we are befogged, whenever we are tempted to rest in traditional notions, whenever we think our prejudices, or our assurances, or our inspirations are good enough, we may all listen to the Socratic summons to clear up our minds and know ourselves; only Socrates tells us to seek for illumination—he does not always give it. From Rome we get the great illuminating idea of a world-wide brotherhood of the race, of a world-state in which all are citizens, of the respect and consideration and tender love we owe to all. It is a more comprehensive conception than that of Confucius; it is a conception into which the all-loving Buddha might have thrown himself, could he have avoided his extreme of asceticism; and yet it is all over tinged with melancholy, for living hope towards it, joyous expectation of its triumph, are wanting. It is this needed note of triumph, this confident, forward-looking expectation, that Jesus brings. Unscientific as he was, unable to stand a Socratic cross-examination as he doubtless would have been, mistaken as he proved to be as to ways and means, he gave a bright and shining goal to men whose feet would otherwise have wandered in darkness and gloom. It was hope that Jesus gave to the world; this was his greatest gift. Sometimes I think it is the seed of all the virtues; for, with hope gone, how can men or nations live?

The deficiencies of Jesus it is the task of modern scientific thought to supply. This it will do not only by the idea of cause and effect, but by its conception of evolution. This conception of evolution—the fruit of geological and biological and historical study—is a modern product. It was unknown to Confucius, unknown to Buddha, unknown to Socrates and Marcus Aurelius and Jesus as truly as to the author of Ecclesiastes. It signifies more than order — mere cause and effect; it signifies progress, the unfolding of effects whose causes were latent and

hidden before. The world is not ever the same; if it is, how happens it that there are suns and planets now where ages ago there were none? The old idea was that the earth, like the "everlasting hills" upon it, had always been. Life is not ever the same; it is ascending. Man is not ever the same; at happy junctures new races have been born. History need not always repeat itself. Dowered with reason and social feeling, man has within him the possibilities of indefinite advance. It is in the make of things that the possibilities of progress lie. Why is not then a world-state in which all are brothers, a "kingdom of God," conceivable? In the face of the magnificent story of evolution in the past, who will set limits to its future course? If the diviner order of which Marcus Aurelius and Jesus dreamed would be the cap and crown of things, what hinders us from actually anticipating it? Why not say with that most scientific of modern imaginative writers, George Eliot:—

> "I too rest in faith
> That man's perfection is the crowning flower,
> Towards which the urgent sap in life's great tree
> Is pressing, seer in puny blossoms now,
> But in the world's great morrows to expand
> With broadest petal and with deepest glow"?

And so I see a new faith rising in the hearts of men and organising itself in human society. It will have the human interests, the practical sense, the sanity of Confucius, but in the service of the grand ideals of a Marcus Aurelius or a Jesus; it will with Buddha loosen the cords that bind men so tightly to the earth, and master all other loves than the love of right and the love of love; and yet it will seek to organise right and love in the daily work of the world, and no service to man shall be so material or so low that it may not also be holy; it will with Socrates inspire to all science, but the darling effort of science shall be to find out the way to those far and shining heights that shall be anew the object of the aspirations and worship of men, to ascertain the laws and true methods of advance. Under the stress of the new faith, wrought organically out of the present and the past, men will again look beyond themselves, will again be sanctified, will again feel a glow in the heart and feel themselves happy in contributing ever so little to so divine a result.

X.

DOES THE ETHICS OF JESUS SATISFY THE NEEDS OF OUR TIME?

It is impossible to forget the moral services which Judaism and Christianity have rendered to the world. To seek to relax the obligations which the old religions have made us feel, to lower or anywise abate from the loftiness of the ideals which they have given to the world, would be to make not progress, but retrogression. Who would ignore the moral insight and heroism of an Amos or an Isaiah? Who would put out of his mind, or could if he would, the lessons of gentleness, of humility, of purity of mind, of charity, of brotherhood, which fell from the lips and shone out in the life of the Prophet of Nazareth? Surely, not by forgetting, but by treasuring, all the good the past

has won, can we hope to advance in the future.

Nonetheless must the advance be made; and in truth all prophecy, Jewish and Christian included, has a temporary as well as a permanent element. Jesus spoke to those of his time, and with the language and the thought—and we may add with the limitations—of his time. But the time and the language and the thought of men change, and wider horizons are opened to their minds. What is the voice of prophecy for to-day? is the question. All in vain would it be for me to assume the prophetic attitude. The prophet does not raise questions; he answers them. He has none of that hesitating, tentative spirit and method which mark the thought of even the best men of this transition age, and which will only cease when the new age shall have come, and the fire of irresistible convictions shall once more burn in the human breast. I am but a questioner along with the rest. I but seek to turn the attention towards the needs and problems of the present, and to show that they at least call for distinct answers and solutions such as we look for in vain in the teaching of Jesus. For, though I am far from denying, but rather have asserted, that Jesus taught eternal principles, I must add that we want more than this; we want the application of the principles to the issues and questions of to-day, and in a form apprehensible to the thought of to-day. Else, as has been said, the principles may become as barren as they are old.[1] Nothing is so common in these days as seeming reverence for the great rules of righteousness along with ignorance of, or indifference to, what they mean and exact in the conduct of life. We want to make this impossible, save with a distinct consciousness of hypocrisy. Yes, sometimes those who themselves most sincerely and impressively utter the great ideas are unconscious of the full sweep of their application. The personage in Terence's play who utters the famous sentiment, "*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto,*" has no horror at infanticide, and calls it irrational to keep a child alive who is in danger of growing up into a career of shame.[1] I do not cite it as a parallel case; but it is not to be forgotten that Jesus, who utters the Golden Rule which, adequately interpreted, would put an end, perhaps, to all the ills of society, makes no condemnation of slavery; and this though a party existed in his day which had reached a height of moral development from which it was condemned—the Essenes. Hence, "Christian ethics" could be of slight service in the late anti-slavery struggles in our land. There is nothing in the New Testament inconsistent with the maintenance of slavery, if only masters are guilty of no wilful oppression or inhumanity. It was only by going back to principles of which Christian ethics themselves are but a partial statement, and which, strangely enough, have found modern expression in that philosophy of human rights to which the Christian Church has as often taken an attitude of hostility as of sympathy, that the way was prepared for the abolition of slavery in this country.

What, then, let us ask generally, though without essaying any kind of formal completeness, are some of the moral needs of our time?

1. First, I will mention that of *intellectual scrupulousness and honesty*. It was an old Roman saying that "two augurs could never meet each other without laughing." I doubt if there is any intellectual vice to-day so flagrant or coarse as this. I have rather in mind what may seem to many light faults—for example, putting interpretations on doctrines not in accordance with their

[1] "Conscience, righteousness—what is there new in these? Their maxims are as old as the hills. Truly, and as barren often as the rocks. The novelty of righteousness is not in itself, but in its novel application to the particular unrighteousness of a particular age" (Felix Adler, *Creed and Deed*, p. 164).

[1] Lecky, *History of Morals*, ii. 30, *n*.

natural meaning; conforming to usages after the ideas at their basis have ceased to be matters of conviction; staying in a Church or denomination on sufferance, and not because of a hearty common belief with them. Doubtless this is often done with good intentions, and some good may be mingled with it as with all evil; but it strikes at what is of priceless value—I might say, rather, of absolute necessity—to the religious teacher—namely, the full heart and the consciousness of entire veracity. Experience proves, too, that doctrines and institutions which require this kind of support are themselves on the downward road; and the process of decay can at the best be stayed, and may even at times (as if in irony of our equivocal intentions) be hastened, by the use of such means. Carlyle is said to have pointed out Dean Stanley to a friend, and remarked: "There goes our friend the Dean, boring holes in the bottom of the good ship Church of England—and doesn't know it!"[1]

Yet not of the uselessness of the compromising spirit, but of the fact that it is contrary to a true standard of intellectual honour, would I speak. Not a few have apparently yet to get the idea that the intellect as well as the will and outward life is under law; that they are not at liberty to believe what they like; that conviction is only honourable, as it is only possible in any strength, when formed in obedience to some kind of necessity. I do not wonder that, with such notions, men deem ethics too small a thing to become religion. It is too small when so partially understood. But ethics really means *whatever ought to be*, and hence is not without bearing on every part of life; it holds up an idea for the intellect as well as the outward actions, and searches the most hidden motives and processes of the soul of man. "Thou shouldst believe the truth," it says, "and thou mayst not twist it to thy liking, or anywise play with it; and the truth must be according to thine own reason, else thou art guilty of profaning the holiest within thee." And yet the evil is not one that can be met by any precept. It is a secret spirit, and can only be met by another spirit, which shall, as it were by magic, put health and soundness into the whole intellectual nature. It is the spirit of downrightness, of absolute and utter sincerity. If such a spirit should get abroad in the community, it would turn many a young man from the easy, compromising course he is now contemplating, and empty churches of not a few who listen, as well as of some who preach.

A new seriousness is needed in all our thinking. Men play with phrases, and think, if they can use the same words, differences of thought need not seriously concern them. They build enormous conclusions on the slenderest premises, and assume to know, on the ground of positive science, for example, what never was so learned, materialism being often as assumptive and headlong as the opposite way of thinking. Or perhaps the ground of rational thought is abandoned, and by will or arbitrary faith, or for some species of subjective interest, a settlement of philosophical problems is assumed to be reached.

What, now, have we in the ethics of Jesus that can be distinctly felt by men to have a bearing upon this lack of straightforwardness, this arbitrariness, not to say dishonesty, in matters of the intellect? It is hard to find anything. I do not mean that Jesus positively slights the intellectual virtues, and I do not agree with those who put this interpretation on the first beatitude. It is simply that he does not take any account of them; that there is not a single passage, to my recollection, in which he makes any emphatic statement concerning them; and let it be remembered it is such distinct utterance that the moral haziness of the present time calls for. The reason of the silence of Jesus is

[1] The anecdote is related by G. W. S. in the New York *Tribune* (semi-weekly), February 25th, 1881.

not far to seek. The duty of man was simpler in that day, because life itself was simpler and the horizon of man narrower. Moreover, the supernatural order, it was conceived, would soon break in upon the natural; and only the primal duties of the heart and life were emphasised. Science and criticism were not, as now, breaking up an old view of the world; and, so far as the time was transitional, it was conceived to be simply towards the completion and practical realisation of a view which had long had currency. At the present time our views of nature and of man are being in many ways radically recast; nothing less than a new philosophy, a new general view of the world, seems to be in process of development, and never before was there such occasion for the exercise of severe intellectual virtue. As matter of fact, the ethics of the intellect, instead of being taught by the followers of Jesus, is most impressively displayed by those whom Christian teachers have generally thought it their duty to oppose or rebuke: I mean the students and investigators in science and history. I am no believer in the all-sufficingness of science, or in the finality of the lessons of history; yet the researches of students in these departments have in many cases illustrated to us an open-mindedness, an eagerness and reverence for truth, and a simple faithfulness of utterance that make a model for the conduct of all thinking. A lesson in morals, in ideal scrupulousness, is conveyed by every genuine scientific investigation, and by none more notably than those of the revolutioniser of our views of nature, the foremost scientific figure of the century—Charles Darwin. Let the same openness, the same fearlessness of investigation, the same virility of thought, and the same exact correspondence of word to thought characterise our religious thinking, and a revolution of equal consequence in this department of human interest will be the result.

2. I turn now to the need of *higher political conceptions and morality.* The State is not merely, as some would have it, a necessary evil, but has a sacred, I might almost say a religious, character and mission. One of its functions is, indeed, to prevent violence, to restrain passion, to act as society's police. As the law of gravitation keeps the planets in their courses and binds every atom to every other, so outwardly, at least, the State is to maintain a similar order among men. But, far more and higher than this, the State is a commonwealth, and is to secure the ends needful for all. Each man has an individual sphere of action, where he is responsible only to himself; but, when his action touches the interest of another, he has another responsibility — namely, to the State. The State must see that, in matters and affairs where the ends of the many are affected, those ends are not made impossible of realisation; it cannot allow individuals or combinations of individuals to win advantages at the expense and to the loss of others. Particularly in our own country, where ideas of equality are at the basis of the political system, is such practical injustice out of place. We have dispossessed kings and priests of their rights over us; we have a government of the people. The question is, Shall it be a government *for* the people? I do not mean a class called by that name, but for *all.* Shall the common, the universal good be secured, and no individual freedom or rights be allowed which tend to the destruction of the freedom and rights of others? These questions must be answered, one way or another, in the next century of our national existence; and, if the choice were between a religion of the old sort and a politics intent on giving them a righteous answer, I see not how any generous-minded young man could hesitate to choose the service of the State. There is a touch of religion in all unselfish devotion to public ends, and it is just such devotion that is the crying political need of our time. The question of better civil service is, at bottom, nothing else.

But what are the lessons which the Christian Gospels read us in political morality? The political ideas of Jesus are a strange contrast to anything we know of by experience. His land was a Roman province. There is no evidence that he did not love it, and every reason to believe that his feeling for it was strong and deep. But his method of political redemption was one of which we in these days can scarcely entertain the idea. It was not, indeed, political redemption, but rather deliverance at the hand of one from whom emperors and empires derive their powers, and who, though the Lord of the whole earth, was in a special sense the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do we suppose that the nobler motive which leads men into the service of the State—the passion for justice and the common weal—was absent from the breast of Jesus? Rather can our sense of justice be nowhere better refreshed than by drinking in his words; nowhere has the tenderness for the least among men been more strikingly shown than in the memorials left us of his sacred life. If justice was not to come from the State, it was, as he believed, to come from a higher than the State; if not through blundering human instrumentalities, it was to come through the heaven-sent "Son of Man," before whom and his angel ministers all mankind would soon be gathered. Christian men and women lived on this faith in the early time, and nothing is more pathetic in history than the story of its gradually fading out of human souls. Even now one will find it in the creeds; and a slight sense of the old awe and the old triumph may perchance come over us as we listen to the chanting of the *Te Deum*, that chiefest of Christian hymns, and hear the words, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge"; but such confessions are on the lips rather than in the hearts of the worshippers.

Accordingly nothing is so lightly and even apologetically treated by liberal Christian critics and teachers as this primitive and always, at least, professed Christian belief. Yet it is no accident, no bit of Oriental colouring, however much of this there may be in filling out the details of the final scene, but the climax and consummation of the Christian view of the world—an answer to that deep question of man's heart, which is not merely what *are* the just and the good, but *how* are they to be accomplished; how is an actual end to be made of injustice and wrong? Religion will dawn anew on the world when the old problem again mightily engages us, and another and equally wide-reaching answer is won. The problem is justice—the bringing to every one the means and opportunity for the highest and best things. *To every one*—that is the very meaning of justice. The highest and best things are not for you or for me, or for any sort or class of men, but for all; they are the end, the right, the ideal destiny of every human being. But if this is the problem, Jesus' method of solving it is no longer capable of belief. In simple honesty it must be said to belong to the category of humanity's blighted hopes. The "Son of Man," who was to come so soon, has not come in all these centuries to bring the promised redemption. The very idea of his coming belongs to a way of thinking now outgrown.

Since Jesus believed in the impossible, he outlined for us no really practicable way of reaching the desired end. He was not concerned with the State, indicating neither ideal nor practical course for it to follow. A similar indifference to and unbelief in what is to us practicable is shown in the writings of the Christian Fathers. Tertullian, early in the third century, says that "nothing is more remote from his interests than public affairs."[1] Lecky remarks of Saint Cyprian (who belongs a little later in the same century) that "the conception of a converted empire never appears to have

[1] "Nec ulla res aliena magis quam publica." (*Apology*, chap. xxxviii.)

flashed across the mind of the Saint. The only triumph he predicted for the Church was that of another world."[1] Saint Augustine, a century later, pathetically asks: "What difference can it make to a man who is about to die whose government he lives under, if only there is no compulsion to impiety and injustice?"[2] His great work, from which this quotation is made, was intended to show, according to Lecky,[3] that the "city of God" was not to be on earth, and that the downfall of the empire, under barbarian invasions, need not trouble his fellow-Christians. If we wish a worthy conception of the mission of the State, we shall find it in the old heathen philosophers and emperors and lawyers rather than in Jesus or his followers. Marcus Aurelius, says Lecky, "made it his aim to realise the conception of a free State, in which all citizens are equal, and of a royalty which makes it its first duty to respect the liberty of the citizens."[4] "Slavery," says the Roman lawyer Florentinus, is "a custom of the law of nations, by which one man, contrary to the law of nature, is subjected to the dominion of another." "As far as natural law is concerned," said another (Ulpian), "all men are equal." "By natural law," again, "all men are born free."

These conceptions, with all that they imply, were never taken up by the Church; and the work of giving them effect through the State is a far more difficult one than that of trusting and praying for the "kingdom of God," as the Church has done. We are now coming to feel that, if justice is to be done in this world (and perhaps equally in any other), it is we (that is, rational beings) who must do it; that praying for its accomplishment is but wasted energy; that its very sacredness commands that we cease all such trifling with it as prayer has now come to be, and give it a seat in our own hearts and an execution in our laws and institutions. Man is to inherit the sanctity and the glory that were to invest the "Son of Man," sitting on his judgment-seat. For, I take it, the doing of justice is a sacred thing. There is a divinity hedging about every king or judge or magistrate or private citizen who takes this task into his hands. For though justice as a reality in human conduct and government is a poor shifting thing, the demand for it is eternal, and issues not from man, nor from the earth, nor from the stars, but from somewhat older than they; and he who executes it acts in that moment as the delegate of God.

A new reverence for the State we want, then—not the blind submission, not the passive obedience which has so often been the attitude enjoined upon Christians, but a reverence for the mission of the State, for its idea; a reverence which shall recognise the dignity of the servants of the State, which shall demand that all legislation and administration shall in increasing measure fulfil the demands of the idea; a reverence which shall thus be the source of progress, and not the support of unreasoning conservatism. A new patriotism we want, not as an appendage, but as a part of ethics and religion. Here is not merely where we eat and sleep and work and travel, but this land is a field of duty; here we are stationed, here we have a task. We are linked to a larger whole than our family or the circle of our business interests. For public ends we are to live. The public service must come to have a dignity and honour in our eyes such as no work on private account can have; and we shall enter it, if to this we are called, as priests might enter a temple, and with thoughts as religious as theirs. The more do we need a new patriotism, since, as men are now so largely studying the past, considering what has been rather than what

[1] *History of Morals*, i. 485.

[2] *De Civitate Dei*, v. 17: "Quid interest sub cujus imperio vivat homo moriturus, si illi qui imperant, ad impia et iniquia non cogent?"

[3] *Morals*, i. 435.

[4] *Ibid*, i. 264. Cf. Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, i. 14.

may and ought to be, and learning that free institutions have so often failed, a kind of scholarly scepticism is arising as to the future of this land, if not, indeed, a distrust of our fundamental doctrine of the rights of man. It *is* a great experiment, viewed from the standpoint of history, this giving of the sovereign power equally into the hands of all citizens; and those who will have certain proof of success before they act must halt and tremble, if not sigh for other times. But those who have it in their blood to believe in the experiment will, by their very belief, help to carry it on to triumph. American patriotism is more than attachment to this land of ours: it is attachment to an idea, it is belief in a cause—the cause of liberty and human rights; and for the issue every one of us has a measure of responsibility.

The State itself must also advance. It must assume new duties—new, that is, not to its mission, but to its past performance. Freedom is good, but it must be universal; and, if my freedom tends to the destruction of another's, mine must be limited. What makes the right of the State to interfere and prevent domestic slavery? What but its very mission to secure and maintain the personal rights of every one within its borders? Are there, then, no other encroachments of the naturally stronger over the naturally weaker? I will not now undertake to answer this question specifically; but wherever there *is* a tendency of this sort—wherever one man or a set of men gets property in land or means of transportation or instruments of production or the means of subsistence, to such an extent as to place others largely at their mercy—there the State should interfere, and, whether by legislation or actual administration in its own name, prevent the monopoly, and act for the good of all. The State with us is not, as it often was in old time, the rule of the stronger over the weaker—if it were, it would have no sanctity or defence; if it should become so, then revolution would be commanded. The State is for justice—to see to it that the strong do not rule the weak, to break the force of the brute struggle for existence. Most ominous of all would be the future of that State wherein freedom should be ostensibly honoured, and yet in the very name of freedom the bonds of servitude be put on men, women, and children;[1] wherein freedom would thus mean a freedom from law, from State examination and supervision, and be only a specious cloak behind which men might pursue their worst selfishness.

A very different spirit must animate the new religion from that which animated the old. The Stoic maxim, and not that implied in the teaching of Jesus, must furnish the rule for human life: "The wise man must take part in public life"—πολιτεύεσθαι τὸν σοφόν. For through the State, rather than through any mythical judgment in the clouds, the ends of justice and right are in an important measure to be worked out.

3. But if we have need of a new political morality, very closely related thereto is our need of *a new industrial ethics*. While the State should to my mind include economy to a certain extent, so that there might be some meaning in the phrase "*political* economy"—and, hence, the true tendency is towards the assumption, or at least direction, by the State of such properties and businesses as become large and public in their influences—the time is yet far distant when a perfect and detailed and particular justice can be prescribed or done by the State. In any case, industry may, relatively speaking, be treated as a separate topic. We live from day to day by our own industry or by that of others; for I mean by industry not all kinds of pursuits, but those which aim to satisfy our physical needs and provide for our material comfort. Industrial concerns are those which touch us to the quick: a disorder here means so much less

[1] Cf. John Stuart Mill (*Political Economy*, ii. 579): "Freedom of contract, in the case of children, is but another word for freedom of coercion."

bread for someone to eat, so much of an increase in the death-rate. Society has always been partially, I may say largely, made up of those whose only means of commanding the necessaries, not to say the comforts, of life lay in their hands and arms, either by way of labour or of threatening. I say always, yet I do not say necessarily; and here is the whole point. There are doubtless native inequalities among men, and there always will be. But the true industrial order would be one in which the inequalities would mutually supplement one another, according to an ideal law of justice and humanity. This ideal order does not, however, belong to history, but to the future; society did not fall from it, but is to rise to it; and the call to rise to it is felt to lie in the very nature and constitution of humanity, whenever it sees through its muddy vesture of brutality and selfishness, and becomes aware of the beatings of its own heart.

The ideal order is, in a word, CO-OPERATION. It implies that those engaged in the production of any means of subsistence or comfort seek no more than a fair profit from the community which they serve, and that they divide the profit fairly among themselves. There is apparently little thought of fairness and justice in the present industrial arrangements. Services are doubtless done both to the community and by the employer to the employed, as by the employed to the employer; but the simple fact that business is ordinarily undertaken for "profit," or, as is said, with "business motives," shows that fairness or equitableness, not to say humanity, is not the determining motive.

The upward limit of the employer's prices is not ordinarily any thought of justice, but the knowledge of what can or will be paid. And the wages he is apt to pay go as high, not as considerations of justice would suggest, but as the demands of the labourers can make them go, and sink as low as men or women—and perhaps children—can be found who will take them. "The very idea," says John Stuart Mill, "of distributive justice, or of any proportionality between success and merit, or between success and exertion, is in the present state of society so manifestly chimerical as to be relegated to the regions of romance."[1] A reviewer naïvely remarks: "The attempt of writers like Bastiat to show an exact harmony between the rules of political economy and the demands of absolute justice involves, like the opposite error of Mr. Froude, a confusion between economical rules and moral precepts."[2] That is, in plain words, economy is one thing, and ethics quite another; and by the "opposite error of Mr. Froude" was probably meant a demand on his part that there be an infusion of ethics into economy, which is at least more honourable, and I believe more likely to succeed, than the attempt of those who would defend and justify the present industrial arrangements on the ground not only that they are rooted "in the nature of things," but that they always mean "service for service."[3] Service for service? In words, yes; but what, not only of the intention, but of the equity, of the exchange? Suppose that I succour a drowning man, and, before doing so, exact of him the greater part of his possessions. That is undoubtedly service for service; his life he plainly values more than his possessions. But what should you say of my exaction? So there are those who take the possessions of men to-day, often the entire possessions—for myriads possess little or nothing but strength of hand and limb—and in return give them but the bare means of subsistence. O precious Equity!

A new ethics of industry must arise; or, I might almost say, ethics must be now applied for the first time in this department of human activity. What does the ethics of Jesus give us in this

[1] *Chapters on Socialism.*
[2] *The Nation*, October 4th, 1877, p. 216.
[3] Cf. article on the identity of "Private Wealth and Public Welfare," by Hon. Edward Atkinson, in *Unitarian Review*, December, 1881.

direction? In truth, if we turn from the ideas of our time to those of Jesus, it is almost like going from one world into another. Did he not feel for poverty? Yes; his sympathies were boundless. But his remedy for it, apart from gifts of charity, indicates a notion of providence, of the relation between man and God, that may at times adorn a poem or a tale, but has lost all hold upon our sober belief. It was not so much even individual toil and labour as trust; belief that, as we are of more value than the sparrows, so we shall be no less provided for than they. Consider the birds, he said, that neither reap nor gather into barns; the lilies, that neither toil nor spin! How strangely contrasted with this idyllic view of the world is that to which we in recent years have become accustomed! The language of Darwin is here better than any paraphrase. "We behold," he says, "the face of Nature bright with gladness; we often see superabundance of food. We do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey. We do not always bear in mind that, though food may now be superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each year." "I estimated," he says again, "chiefly from the greatly reduced number of nests in the spring, that the winter of 1854–5 destroyed four-fifths of the birds in my own grounds."[1] The fact is that the "heavenly Father," of whom Jesus spoke, probably denies food and protection to more of his creatures than he actually provides for; if he did not, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of any single pair of them. Hence, there often arises a struggle for existence, which for severity and pitilessness can hardly be surpassed by anything our imagination can conceive. Man also is involved in the same process. Is he not often equally pressed with the struggle, and as unconcernedly left to his fate by the "heavenly Father"?

Darwin would console us, in reference to the lower orders of being, "with the belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive." Ah! but man is not one of the lower orders of being, and the consolation nowise fits our grief for him. Man is an animal who thinks, and does feel fear; his death is often miserably drawn out; he survives often long after he or others can see the use of living; and sometimes it is at last forgotten that he is a man, and he becomes to many but a mass of flesh or filth, cumbering the ground. Oh, if we have a view of human nature that causes us no shudder and no resentment when we think or know of this; if we do not say, O remorseless struggle, thou hast no right or place in the circle of human relations; there only the law of respect and help and pity should have sway! then am I at a loss to know how to proceed. I can only address myself at the outset to those who have a different estimate of human nature, who respond to the thought of Jesus' words, if not to the inference he draws from them: "Ye are of more value than many sparrows"; who believe that Hamlet's words, "How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!"—that these are none too good for man, since, though they flatter him as he often is, they give the portrait of what he may be. I can only address those who see in man, in every man, somewhat of measureless possibilities, of priceless worth. On those who think in this way a new burden is laid. We can no longer, without hypocrisy, commend the poor and unfortunate to the care of the "heavenly Father"; nor can we assent to the cool indifference and practical materialism of *laissez-faire* doctrinaires, though the facts of the

[1] *Origin of Species*, pp. 49, 54.

economist and the thoughts of man lying at the basis of the Christian confidence have equally our acknowledgment. We have, in a word, to cherish the thought and to change the facts. For though the facts of external nature—of rain and the soil and its fruits—are not in our power, the facts of human institution and custom and will *are*; and I believe there is no need that a single human being in the limits of civilisation should suffer or want, or live any but a nobly human life, if society would but awake and respond to the task laid upon it. There is no trouble in the nature of things; the nature of things even points and commands, and in a single way. The trouble is with man, who will not accept ideal guidance, but prefers each one to take his own way, and to act without reference to the good of all.

Hence, if the old religion centred in prayer to God, the new must be an address to man—and yet not as if the word merely came from man, but in the name of the Highest, and with the aim of connecting human life once more with a supreme sanctity. This sanctity is that of justice. Jesus, as we have said, taught the Golden Rule, which is a popular and apprehensible, if somewhat rude, statement of justice; but he left no distinct and binding impression that industrial life must be ordered thereby. With his peculiar view of Providence and of the great change impending in human affairs, the problem of life was hardly serious enough to call for such distinct inculcation. Hence, though for the little time that his spirit was a fresh and powerful force in the minds of his followers his high demands were matched in the order of their lives, and the earliest Christianity had some of the features of a genuine brotherhood; when discouragements came there was felt to be no binding obligation to continue these features; and later on, and through the centuries of Christian history, very little was done to abolish the class separations into which human society always naturally falls. The practical working ideal of the Church has been, mostly, that of charity and pity and consideration on the part of the higher classes in their treatment of the lower, and of deference and submission from the lower to the higher. Justice would make charity, in great measure, unnecessary, and the airs of self-humiliation an offence. Instead of "Christian society"—including the poor and the rich, the alms-giver and the beggar—justice would give us a high society of equals, wherein should be neither patronage nor obsequiousness,[1] but only a noble, mutual courtesy and respect.

"One hour of justice," said an old Mohammedan precept, "is worth seventy years of prayer." Let us say the same of charity. All these hospitals and homes and asylums, while in one way an honour, are in another an indication of the disease of our civilisation. We do not strike at the root by raising up more of them, though while the evils last this must be done. Yet the religion of the future will only come with those who do strike at the root, and who, whether at the command of the State or in obedience to the law in their own hearts, do no business and engage in no industry in which ample justice is not meted out to all who join them in it; who will use talents for leadership and initiatory enterprise, not to give them mastery over others, but, as Godin and Leclaire in France have done, for the elevation of others, and will feel in all they do, and in their most material concerns as well, an o'ermastering religious constraint. For though religion by no means necessarily includes a system of theological dogmas, or prayer or worship in the customary sense, I have no confidence that any great industrial reform will come save as a product of religion. All man's natural self-regarding impulses are against any reform. Those winning in the battle would rather have the battle

[1] The old social ideal is finely portrayed in Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley.

go on as it is; and those who do not win, and who may some time, instead of fighting for what they can only most scantily get, turn and fight their successful competitors who seem to be keeping them from getting more—they, even if they should triumph, would only solve the problem for themselves, and not for humanity, and would perhaps in turn have to give way to another inferior class, who, stung by *their* oppression, would rise and overthrow them. The root of the matter, the solution of the industrial problem, is no more with the working classes than with their employers. Both are equally striving for the mastery, and I have heard it said by a manufacturer that no foreman was so self-assertive and tyrannical as one suddenly elevated from the rank of a common workman.[1] The solution of the problem is only in an idea, a principle, and in persons only as they are permeated and actuated by the idea and principle. Moreover, the acceptance of the idea under the stress of no merely selfish desire or impulse, but because it is just and commanding in itself, *is* religion, proving, as it does man's link with what is higher and the Highest, and hinting to him as in a dream—

> "The hills where his life rose,
> And the sea where it goes."

4. A fourth ethical need of our time is that of a new statement of *the end of human existence*. There is general dissatisfaction with the idea that this end is for each one in the saving of his own soul. The early Christian idea of the "kingdom of heaven" was much nobler, and has, indeed, a basic meaning of inestimable worth; yet the form and expectation with which not only the early Church, but Jesus himself, connected it have proved untrustworthy and delusive. The righteous ordering of human life, which was to come with the reappearance of the "Son of Man," and to come so soon, has failed to come in all these centuries. And the notions which are the survival of that old conception—of a heaven beyond the skies, of a Deity who will be seen, a son sitting on his right hand, and of angels who are their ministers—belong rather to the realm of fairy-land than to that of actual fact. There is, hence, a widespread tendency to find the ends of existence in what is near, palpable, of present, even of material, interest.

Now, though it is impossible not to sympathise with this tendency, so far as it contrasts with the old one of paying slight attention to human affairs and interests, it, too, has its limitations; and there are deeper moments in our experience in which we distinctly feel them. There is something within us which, at least in thought and purpose, rises above all limits, and seeks a measureless good. As that something impels one to find a larger share of his happiness in that of others, so it makes it impossible to find content in seeing others merely happy. One feels that the merely happy have but learned the alphabet of existence; that the notion of perfection includes the disposition of the heart, the worthiness to be happy, the enlargement of the mind, the ennobling of the moral life—these all carried on to heights beyond our experience or even imagination; and that nothing less than the perfect, and this shared in by all, can be the end, the goal. It is characteristic of religion to start from the idea of this limitless good, to discern the worth of all minor or partial goods from their tendency to ultimate therein, to send our aspirations to the very stars, and thus lend an infinite sanctity to each particular act. Jesus struck the note of religion when he counselled his disciples to be content with no traditional rules of goodness, but only with perfection (Matt. v. 48). His impassioned apostle struck it when he wrote: "*Whatsoever* things are true or honourable or just or pure or lovely, think on these things"

[1] Cf. Æschylus (*Prometheus Bound*, 36):
> "Who holds a power
> But newly gained is ever stern of mood."

(Phil. iv. 8). Religion is the passion of the soul for all good.

As there are means and ends in the world—as, for example, matter is for form, and lower forms for higher, inorganic for organic, insentient for sentient, and the merely sentient for the rational—so the ends of rational existence are the ends of the world, and perfection is not merely a human, but a world, problem. On every act of virtue the stars shine; for every choice of the higher for the lower, for every sacrifice of private to universal good, a mute sympathy runs through universal nature. And no act of ours born of that upward aim can fail of its issue. There can be no destruction of what is truly good. There is something we mortal men can do that is not mortal; that

"Will last and shine transfigured
In the final reign of Right.
It will merge into the splendours
Of the City of the Light."[1]

It is no mere earthly paradise that is hinted at in these lines, though to strive for a nobler social order on the earth as a proximate form of the perfect is necessary, but an end and outcome of human toil and struggle unaffected by earthly changes or earthly dissolution—in truth, a world-city, wherein world-issues are to be gathered up and a world-purpose consummated, and the thought of which is once more to give dignity and the sense of permanence to life.

Do we survive with this good; shall we know in some other state of existence the good we have done in this; shall we meet those for whom we have done, and recognise those whom we love? I know not; and I hold it to be at the best a curious question, albeit one deeply touching these clinging affections that make up so much of the sweetness of human life. The ends of moral perfection are not for our personal satisfaction, but we for them. He who loves not the true and the good better than himself; he who does not put them above all personal attachments; who does not find in the dearest object of his love a reflection of somewhat above and higher, and not a purely individual possession—he, however else fortunate or gifted, has never found himself in an act of religious veneration. For this is not man meeting with man, but man bowing before the unalterable, the eternal ideal nature of things; not God, in the ordinary sense of that term, but the God of gods—something so secret and necessary that, were it to cease, the stars would vanish out of the sky, and, were it only to cease in human consciousness, human society would relapse into barbaric chaos. Emerson said, not long ago: "I see that sensible men and conscientious men all over the world were of one religion—the religion of well-doing and daring, men of sturdy truth, men of integrity, and of feeling for others. My inference is that there is a statement of religion possible which makes all scepticism absurd."[1] It is such a statement of religion that the time needs; and I can hardly believe that personal conceptions of God or immortality will make a necessary part of it—which is far from saying that men shall be forbidden to entertain them. The certainty and the sanctity of religion lie, to my mind, in man's moral nature. Here alone is, in addition to the *may-be* or the *can-be*, the MUST—the voice of command, the tone of authority, without which, and without assent to which, religion is but a playing with our opinions or our feelings. We are under orders; though we are free to obey or not, honour and safety lie only in obedience. And religion will come to us afresh when there is a new perception of this fact, and a new recasting of life and thought and all our human relations in obedience to it.

[1] Professor Felix Adler, *The City of the Light.*

[1] "The Preacher" (in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*).

XI.

THE SUCCESS AND THE FAILURE OF PROTESTANTISM

WHAT is the significance of Protestantism? In what respect has it been successful? In what has it failed?

Protestantism was successful, in the first place, in that it was a break with the Catholic Church, and not a mere reform of it. Here Luther himself was great, and not merely the logic of his doctrines. Luther was indeed no violent despiser of tradition and authority. In his very theses, nailed up on the door of the church at Wittenberg, he did not, contrary to the common opinion, attack the Pope nor the Pope's power to pardon sins. He said: "Cursed be he who speaks against the indulgences of the Pope; but blessed be he who speaks against the foolish and impudent language of the preachers of indulgence!" To the second ambassador from the Pope Luther even offered to be silent on the matter, and to let it die away of itself, if only his opponents would be silent on their part; though he added, ominously, "if they continue attacking me, a serious struggle will soon arise out of a trifling quarrel." He declared that he had made his protest against indulgences, "as a faithful son of the Church," and offered to address the public to that effect. And in this public explanation he said that, though everything was in a very wretched state in the Roman Church, "this is not a sufficient reason for separating from it. On the contrary, the worse things are going on within it the more should we cling to it; for it is not by separation that we shall make it better." Luther was not, then, spoiling for a fight; in truth, he fought only because he had to. And I do not know of a sublimer instance of the courage and the daring and the defiance which a simple inward necessity may put into a man. He took his stand because he must; because, as he said before the assembled princes at Worms, he could not do otherwise.

I need not recount the steps by which Luther was led to break with the Church. I need not recall his lonely spiritual struggles in the monastery at Erfurt, when he came to feel the futility of all mere outward works, and that only by faith can man be justified—though this was the seed-thought of the Reformation. I need not describe his disputations with Eck at Leipsic, where he realised that his own views were like those of Huss and Wycliffe before him; and hence, if popes and councils had condemned them, that popes and councils could not be infallible. I need not recount the stages of his rapid intellectual development at about this time; how his spirit seemed to rise at the rumour of a papal Bull against him; how he saw that his cause was the cause of Germany, and hence issued his address to the German nobility; how in an almost boyish exuberance of spirits he burned the Pope's bull; and how at last he took his world-historic stand before the imperial Diet at Worms, saying he would not recant, knowing that to act against conscience, though a mighty Church and a mighty empire should approve, is neither right nor safe.

But though the man is great, the significance of the scene is greater. That was the first act of the Protestant revolution. Ill would it have fared with the world had Erasmus stood there.

He, in common with other scholars of the day, was disaffected; he wrote satires on the monks and schoolmen, and in general sympathised with Luther; but he would stay in the Church, would reform from within, and conciliate and compromise at any cost. He continued his satires and preached tolerance to the last; but he could not endure schism, proclaiming that "peaceful error was better than tempestuous truth." It was as it is to-day with the Broad Churchmen who stay in the English establishment, or the Liberals in general who feel that they cannot stand on their own feet outside the Church. Above every other fear is that of breaking with the past, of a seeming disloyalty to the institutions in which they have been nurtured. Luther knew but one thing, however—loyalty to the convictions that were in him; if the Church did not give him freedom to hold to and express them, he would do so all the same.

We can hardly imagine to-day what an immense fact resting on the past Luther had to face. To break with orthodoxy or any form of Protestant Christianity is an insignificant thing compared with putting oneself out of the pale of that communion which held the keys of earth almost as truly as it seemed to hold those of heaven. For if the Catholic Church is comparatively harmless now, then it was an empire that brooked no rival. The State was no more than a body, with the Church for its soul. It was a universal empire, and knew no national distinctions; it had its system of taxation, like any other kingdom—a tenth part of the produce of the soil of Christendom went to it; it owned almost a third of the land of Europe. The officers of this empire were not amenable to the civil jurisdiction—they could be tried only in their own courts, and under the cover of this protection to themselves they could fleece their flocks practically as they liked; they alone could marry people, and they alone could grant divorces; they had the disposition of the property of deceased persons—a will had to be proved in their courts; they alone buried the dead, and could refuse Christian burial in the churchyards. And this empire, touching men in almost every relation in life, centred in Rome; and its affairs, it was well known, were administered, not for the benefit of its subjects everywhere, but to heighten the influence and pomp and power and to swell the revenues of Roman popes and cardinals—even as, in the old days of the Cæsars, the masses of the people scattered through the provinces were ruled by governors, not for their own but for the conqueror's good. It was this empire over the souls and bodies of men; over life and death, and what was believed to come after death; over what men should think, and how they should act—and not in the name of truth and the progressing knowledge of men, but of a view of the world which almost every scientific discovery and almost every independent philosophical reflection tended to undermine—it was this old antiquated empire that was broken, smitten on its crown, and set to tottering on its feet, when Luther lifted up his voice over three hundred and fifty years ago. All hail, O valiant man, for this first and mighty blow! We breathe more freely now at the very thought of it. Other blows will follow after; and notwithstanding all the reforms the papal empire may undertake, notwithstanding all the efforts it may make to show its harmony with modern thought and the principles of political freedom, notwithstanding all its Councils of Trent, and all its Capels leading captive here and there a weak-minded man or silly woman, it will never again have its old supremacy. It is an outlived institution; humanity and the spirit of progress have passed it by.

This was the first success of Protestantism. A second is closely related to it, and for this too we are indebted to Luther himself. Goodness had become an external, formal thing in the Catholic Church. It always tends to become so. It first creates certain forms, and then loses itself in them; and as men are

counted good citizens who pay their taxes, vote, and hold office, irrespective of their thought and motive in so doing, so men were counted good Christians who simply obeyed the rules of the empire I have described, who said so many Aves or Pater-nosters, did so much fasting or penance, gave so much money, or received of such and such sacraments. That is, there was an external test of character; and the significance of Luther is that he proposed an internal test. In one of his earliest discourses, two years before he published his theses, he strongly urged the doctrine that piety consists not in outward works, but in an inward principle; that an act in itself good even becomes sinful if the motive is sinful.[1] Luther did not use philosophical language, and his thought was cast entirely in theological moulds; but the fundamental significance of his great doctrine of justification by faith rather than by works seems to me to have been this—that the inward attitude alone determines the worth of a man; so that, though a man's whole outward life were right, yet, if the thought or impulse that lay within and behind were merely selfish, he would still be in the wrong. Luther did not say works were of no account, nor does his principle of justification involve of itself any contempt of the rules and ritual of the Church; he did say that works or acts *severed from their motive*, and conformity to rites and rules *in themselves*, were of no account—yes, that when viewed as themselves giving those who practise them moral worth, they were harmful and an offence. Only Luther said "in the sight of God" where I have said "moral"; and an offence to him was not simply to an ideal law, but to a personal, angry God. Protestantism thus sprang from a quickening of the conscience and a deepening of the moral life. Luther could find no rest in fastings and penances and almsgiving—they humbled the body, they did not purify the soul. It was at the centre of his being that he wanted rest; and he found it, while still at the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, in the suggestions of a passage of Scripture, "The just shall live by faith"; and ever and anon it would ring in his ears and send a strange peace over his soul—"The just shall live by faith." May I give a modern version of that old experience? In the charming Norwegian story of Arne, a simple peasant girl says: "I often think there's something that sings when all is still"; and she spoke in a voice so soft and low, the narrative goes on, that her companion felt as if he had heard it now for the first time. "It is the good within our own souls," he answered. And it is true that when a man, instead of seeking to do this or that external thing which will commend him before the world or give him a kind of vainglory in his own eyes, turns and gives himself over to the good, for ever to obey it, something does sing within; and whether we call it the good or God, whether we say "the good sings," or "God is well pleased," it is all the same; the differences are differences of dialect, not of fact. Protestantism is thus, so far as it is true to the original Lutheran spirit, more inward, more searching than Catholicism; its religion is more personal; it may make less show, but it has more substance; it places men face to face with the central truth of things; it brings them immediately before the nameless Authority of which all else is shadow and reflection. I do not say this of Protestantism everywhere. In England it was more a political affair, and, instead of heightening the moral life, it came into being only with a lowering of it, in obedience to the intrigues of Henry VIII. The Puritans were the first true Protestants in England, as the Huguenots were in France, and the followers of Zwingle and Calvin in Switzerland. But, in general, Protestantism surely brought a new moral seriousness into life. Compare but for one moment Luther or Zwingle or Calvin with Leo X., and see the difference in the type of man.

In another way, also, Protestantism

[1] Sear's *Life of Luther*, p. 169.

has been a success; it has given us freedom of conscience. It must be confessed that here Luther himself is not so great as the logic of the movement which he started. Luther was no advocate of freedom of conscience as a principle; he desired freedom simply for his own conscience. But the logic of history does not rest on any individual's partial interpretation of it. When Luther said at Worms, "It is not safe nor right to do anything against conscience; here stand I, so help me God," he virtually stood for every sincere reformer since; he spoke for every progressive movement in thought and society down to our day. It is not fair then, to my mind, to charge the narrowness and bigotry of many Protestants, whether individuals or Churches, to their Protestantism; it is to be charged to them as men or as associations, for narrowness and bigotry too easily attach themselves to men and associations: it may sometimes be charged to them as Christians and as Christian Churches, but it can only be due to the lack of real Protestantism. The very meaning of Protestantism is freedom. Puritanism was a characteristic Protestant movement, for it was an assertion of conscientious scruples against the laxness and formalism of the English Church. Unitarianism was another characteristic Protestant movement, for it was a revolt of reason and conscience against the dogmas of orthodoxy. When anyone stands up for the private conviction of his soul, against whatever assembly of magnates or respectabilities, he is in very essence a Protestant. If Luther, then, persecuted Carlstadt, if Calvin burned Servetus, if the Puritans banished Roger Williams, they were so far not Protestants; and in the very name of the principles by which they secured their own freedom they may be condemned. It takes a long while for a principle thrown into history to work out its consequences, but sooner or later it will. This principle of freedom of conscience is perhaps first realised in any completeness in this country; but it is a fruit of Protestantism—it was thrown in among the forces of history, though he little knew all he was doing, by the hand of Martin Luther.

As a fourth success of Protestantism, and as a result of this spirit of freedom working in connection with the tendencies of modern thought, not only the old Church but the old religion is gradually breaking up. Christianity itself is dissolving and passing away. Christianity was not half so much hurt in the last century by Paine and Voltaire as it is in the minds of the most serious and thoughtful men to-day by the new indirect influences of science and historical criticism. Men who never hear popular liberal lectures, who have never read Paine or Voltaire, are getting a new view of the world in the very intellectual atmosphere they breathe, and the old ideas of miracle and prayer and Providence drop away so silently that they do not know they have lost them. The new thought is in literature, in poetry, in science, in the daily newspaper. The differences between cultivated men in all Churches and in none are really surprisingly small. If we do not ask for particular opinions, much less attack them, but simply note how they are reflected in a man's view of life, society, trade, politics—and this is the only real test—educated Presbyterians do not differ essentially from educated Baptists or Methodists or Unitarians. Their particular denominational connections are a matter of birth and tradition; their religion is, under a disguise of pious names and phrases, a reverence for goodness and a confidence that the universe is on that side; their Christianity is much like that of a friend who once said to me he was not anxious for the name Christian, but, if anyone should say he was not a Christian, he should resent it. The special ideas that were at the foundation of the different denominations have little interest for any man now, unless he be an antiquarian or a zealot. Indeed, no other result could well follow from the Protestant principle of freedom of conscience and private judgment; for it could hardly be expected

that private judgment would rest with simply interpreting the Bible—sooner or later it must essay to judge of the worth of the contents of the Bible. Luther helped to strengthen the mind in the consciousness of its own perceptions over against the authority of the Church; when the mind reaches perceptions, inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture, the same logic inspires to a similar confidence here. Nor can any sacred person, more than any sacred book, be allowed to remain an unquestioned authority over the mind; yet when Jesus ceases to be an authority, Christianity in any distinctive sense ceases to be. Thus fearlessly and relentlessly is the logic of Protestantism conducting out of the very religion in which it was born. Luther would have stood aghast at those who no longer call themselves Christians, to whom Jesus is no longer a Lord and Master; yet no other result could ultimately follow, and he is finally responsible for it, and to the future this result will be counted as one of the successes of Protestantism. For humanity cannot wear for ever its old garments; as it casts off old Churches, so it does old religions. The spirit of the future calls upon it to do so; for the future is rich with possibilities, and will yield grander things than ever the past has known.

As I pass now to my fifth point, I am at a loss to know whether to rank it among the successes or failures of Protestantism. It is that Protestantism has practically given us the Bible (for it was almost a sealed book before), and particularly that it has brought us face to face with Jesus and the apostles. The common people in the time of Luther knew little or nothing of the Bible; Jesus and the apostles they vaguely thought of as the founders and pillars of the great empire that was everywhere about them, rather than as living figures in history. And if the secular Renaissance is to be commended for reviving an interest in the old Greek and Roman literatures, irrespective of ecclesiastical commentary, so is the later religious renaissance worthy to be praised for putting the old Jewish and the early Christian literatures into tongues in which every one could read them for himself. Everywhere, as a result of the Reformation, the Bible came to be the property of the common man, and Jesus and the apostles were seen somewhat as they actually were. So far Protestantism was a success. For I regard it as no part of a genuine radicalism to condemn the Bible indiscriminately, and to wish that the world should know nothing of it. The Bible has had its uses in history; it testifies to and is the product of some of the creative periods in history. Most of the prophetic writings, for example, of the Old Testament, the narratives about Jesus and the writings of his early followers in the New Testament, came from real men, to whom religion was not a sham, and whose minds were intent on the supreme thing in life—namely, the accomplishment of righteousness. The very superstitious reverence for the Bible that so many have had is a testimony to its power: Cicero and Plato and Aristotle never touched the heart and conscience deeply enough to produce any superstitions about themselves. Nevertheless, while in one way the open Bible of Protestantism was one of its successes, in another it has been, and is coming more and more to be seen to be, one of its failures. The Bible glows with the idea of righteousness as no other book does that has become the property of our Western world; and to those who have the wit to distinguish substance from form it is still, and may always be, a means of moral inspiration. But the whole intellectual setting of this idea is no longer true to us. Righteousness gains nothing in authority to us by being regarded as the will of a supernatural being; our confidence in its triumph in the world is nowise heightened by the picture of a judgment which shall some time separate the righteous and wicked as sheep and goats. The open Bible was not even an altogether successful

defence against the Roman Church. True, the Bible said nothing of the Roman Church or the Pope, or of councils or purgatory, or of the intercession of the saints; and this to many narrow-minded Protestants may have been enough. But the Bible does furnish premises from which some Catholic doctrines are by no means illogical conclusions. If one man spoke with infallible authority, is there any reason in the nature of things why others should not speak with the same authority? If one man could forgive sins, it can hardly be denied that he might have left this power to others who should come after him—as, indeed, he is reported to have done. If we may pray for those who are still on the earth, and our prayers may avail, why may we not for those who have gone into the mysterious beyond? If the intercession of righteous men now may avail before God, why not much more truly the intercession of those who have become saints in heaven? Protestants affect a great horror that Catholic priests should claim, for example, to forgive sins. The Pharisees manifested a similar horror when Jesus claimed to; yet we read that he gave the same power he had himself to his apostles, saying: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever ye retain, they are retained."[1] Was there some peculiar reason why men should be forgiven in the first century of the Christian era that does not hold of the subsequent centuries? But however lame an instrument the Bible may be against Catholicism, it can still less be a rule of faith and practice for men to-day. Its idea of righteousness is of perennial value; but the whole stage of culture in which it was written is now superseded by a higher stage. We cannot think as the Bible would have us think, we cannot believe or hope as Jesus and the apostles would have us believe and hope, we cannot live and act as they command us to act; we are separated from them, not merely by eighteen centuries of time, but by eighteen centuries of experience, of knowledge, and of thought. Passing over minor differences, what man in sympathy with the culture of to-day can believe in the kingdom of heaven as Jesus believed in it? what man can look out on the world and trust in a personal Providence as Jesus trusted? what man can believe in miracle as Jesus believed, or pray as Jesus prayed, or entertain the thought of Jesus that Jesus had of himself? Jesus is no longer authority to us, the apostles are no longer authority to us; the whole Bible represents what the Germans call an *überwundener Standpunkt* (a point of view that has become outgrown). Men only fancy the Bible is authority to them, as they are not really acquainted with it, as they have never taken the pains to look at it in the light of the circumstances in which it was written. Protestantism hoping to rule the world with its open Bible is a failure.

Another failure of Protestantism is that it has not given us any new faith, such as the world needs. Protestants have for the most part simply clung to certain remnants or shreds of an old garment; they do not see that humanity cannot live on remnants, and they have given to the world no positive new regenerative principle. The Catholic Church has all the positive parts of the Protestant system of doctrine. The Unitarians, for example, save themselves by keeping the Christian name and professing discipleship for Jesus; but Catholics are all Christians and all disciples of Jesus. Orthodox Christians believe in the Divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the Atonement; but Catholics believe in all these doctrines and many more. Episcopal Churches have their priests and bishops and ritual; but all this the Catholic Church has in much grander style. For freedom of conscience and thought is hardly a

[1] John xx. 23. If this Gospel be regarded as of doubtful authority, a saying of similar tenour is to be found in Matthew xvi. 19.

positive, but only a formal, principle. It means standing by the truth as we see it, or, at best, readiness for truth; it does not mean new and positive truth itself; and before there can be a new faith there must be new ideas. Again, the holding of an internal as opposed to an external test of character is not enough. The thought alone gives dignity to the life; but what shall be the thought? Protestantism has developed no new thought; it has no new ideas of life and society; it has seemed to regard moral idealism as exhausted in the statements of the Sermon on the Mount: it has even no genuine understanding of these statements, for, if it had, it would take the hint they give, and elaborate an ideal of social righteousness for the world. For this is what the world wants—not the Bible, nor revisions of it, nor a rational understanding of it; no, nor Jesus himself, nor a true estimate of his life and work, but an era of social righteousness. This is what Protestantism has not given us, what it has apparently had no aim of giving us; for its thought of a perfect social order is nowise different from that of Catholicism, as being something that has elsewhere its accomplishment, something which is not of our creation and has slight bearings on this actual order in which we now live. Protestantism, as Christianity generally, has given a kind of sanction to the order of society that it finds, and feels slight impulse to create a new one. Therefore, a new religion must come, not preaching acquiescence and submission, but holding up a contrast to what we see about us—saying that in the idea alone is sacredness and authority, and that contrary facts, though as secure as the earth and as habitual as day and night, have no warrant before it. The world needs no kind of an ecclesiastical religion, with priests and prayers and holy books; it needs a religion of justice. In the new religion, nothing will count but clear thoughts and honest deeds. Prayer, trust in an outside justice, all reliance on another for what man must do himself, will be abandoned; man will have his connection with the unseen in the command which issues from it, "Thou must do the justice that thou cravest," and in his answering obedience.

Yes, Protestantism in the person of Luther cast the weight of its influence against the era of social righteousness on which the hearts of the poor oppressed German peasants were set. It must suffice here to refer to this single instance of Protestant faithlessness. The German peasant wanted freedom—he wanted ecclesiastical and political freedom. The Church and the feudal lord united in despoiling him; he had no rights worth mentioning against either. He was bound to the soil, was obliged to render any service the lord called for, and had lost his right to the old common woods and fishing grounds and pastures; and to the Church he paid not only tithes—the tenth part of all his corn, grass, colts, calves, lambs, pigs, geese, and chickens, and even every tenth egg—but he paid money for every particular service he got from the Church. A Catholic writer of that period, brother to the secretary of the Emperor Charles V., says: "We can hardly get anything from Christian ministers without money: at baptism, money; at bishoping, money; at marriage, money; for confession, money—no, not extreme unction without money. They will ring no bells without money, no burial in the church without money; so that it seemeth that Paradise is shut upon them that have no money. ......The rich man may readily get indulgences, but the poor none, because he wanteth money to pay for them." No wonder the peasants protested against such a double tyranny. They drew up twelve articles in which they stated their demands:—

1. The right to choose their own pastors. 2. They would pay tithe of corn; but small tithes, as every tenth calf or pig or egg, they would not pay. 3. They would be free, and no longer serfs and bondmen. 4. Wild game and fish to be free to all. 5. Woods and

forests to belong to all for fuel. 6. No services of labour to be more than were required of their forefathers. 7. If more service required, wages must be paid for it. 8. Rent, when above the value of the land, to be properly valued and lowered. 9. Punishments for crime to be fixed. 10. Common land to be again given up to common use. 11. Death gifts (that is, the right of the lord to take the best chattel of the deceased tenant) to be done away with. 12. Any of these articles proved to be contrary to the Scriptures or God's justice to be null and void.

What a chance in view of this for a religion that meant to be of any use in this world, that meant to vindicate the right and put down the wrong, to assert itself! By this time many of the princes had become Protestant. Did their Protestantism mean any increased sense of social justice? What did Luther himself say? He was not indeed without sympathy for the peasants--he was too much of a man, to say nothing of Christian, for that; and he did not fail, as a valiant man, to give the princes his opinion of them. Even before the articles were published he said: "The common man, tried beyond all endurance, overwhelmed with intolerable burdens, will not and cannot any longer tamely submit; and he has doubtless good reasons for striking with the flail and the club, as he threatens to do." Again, of the articles he says to the princes that some of them "contain demands so obviously just that the mere circumstance of their requiring to be brought forward dishonours you before God and man"; and he reminds them that "government was not instituted for its own ends, nor to make use of the persons subject to it for the accomplishment of its own caprices and evil passions, but for the interests and advantage of the people. Now, the people have become fully impressed with this fact, and will no longer tolerate your shameful extortions. Of what benefit were it to a peasant that his field should produce as many florins as it does grains of corn if his master may despoil him of the produce, and lavish like dirt the money he has thus derived from his vassal in fine clothes, fine castles, fine eating and drinking?" But when the princes refused to yield to his exhortations, when the peasants began to make good their words by their deeds, when they threatened to arise in revolt, Luther himself yielded, and practically went over to the other side.

It is not a pleasant task to quote Luther's language against the peasants after they were once fairly started on their violent career. It is not the man, but the Churchman, who speaks. His theory was, "Christians must suffer rather than take up arms"; they must bear the cross —"that is a Christian's right," he said; "he has no other." He spoke of Christians as flocks of sheep, not to be tended, but to be slaughtered, one after the other --"Nicht Weideschaf—Schlachtschaf! nur so hin; eins nach dem anderen!" If they rebelled against the civil power, there was but one fate for them. As to the "murderous and robbing hordes of peasants," as he styled them, he said to the princes: "Let them be destroyed, strangled, stabbed, secretly or publicly, by whomsoever is able to do it, even as a mad dog is killed, right away!" I do not believe that this was all due to cowardice and a desire to side with princely authority—though these motives may have partly operated with Luther; for, as he did not fail to commend clemency at the end of the war, he did not, during its continuance, cease to speak of the "mad tyranny" of princes and lords. In my judgment, it was not Luther merely that failed at this critical moment; it was not merely Protestantism that failed—it was Christianity, and its impracticable, unphilosophical, and untrue doctrine of non-resistance. It was the Christian doctrine that we are not to take justice into our own hands, but must leave it to another, that was answerable for the horrors of the Peasants' War. Luther had said this, and quoted Scripture passages to this

effect from the very start. There was not so much a change in his view or his sympathies as in the circumstances to which his view could apply. He said from the beginning such things as these: "To revolt is to act like heathen; the duty of the Christian is to be patient, not to fight; defensive justice is for God alone. No one can be his own judge; an attempt to be that is something which God cannot endure—it is against God, and God is against it." Such a view is to men to-day mythological; but to Luther, following closely after the teaching of his Master, it was sober truth. But if Luther had been more of a heathen, he would have stood before the world a truer man. Not on the basis of such a view has progress been made in the world. Had Christianity been the rule of life for intelligent Frenchmen a hundred years ago, there would have been no French Revolution; had the thought that paralysed the arm of Luther been the conviction of the American colonists in 1776, the United States might still have been a British province. Progress is with those who know that justice is to be done by them, who would not honour themselves did they not defend themselves against those who outrage their rights. I do not answer for all that the peasants did; many of them were as fanatical as Luther, and they were as little disposed to mercy as Luther charged the nobles to be to them. But the question is, Were they not right in their claims at the outset?

How mean an idea of the significance of this whole matter many have! D'Aubigné says that the people were not ripe for the enjoyment of political reform; that many unregenerate souls were not prepared for liberty.[1] The cant of it! Fortunately for social order, he says, the gospel preserved Luther; for what would have happened had he carried his extensive influence into the camp of the peasants? One can conjecture what would have happened—namely, the victory of the peasants, assisted by the towns and cities, which were almost equally hostile to the nobles, and perhaps a peaceable victory, the horrors of massacre averted, and no two hundred added years (as was actually the case) of miserable serfdom for the peasantry and of pride and power for the lords. Froude can only speak of the Peasants' War as the "first scandal" to the Reformation;[1] in truth, had the Reformation possessed the moral fibre which we demand of a religion to-day, it would have been its first golden opportunity. A biographer of Luther speaks in this connection of the "dark clouds" that threatened a new danger to the cause of the Reformation:[2] what a cause, I am tempted to say, that did not find a part of its very mission in meeting the danger! Apologists who look at the question with the sympathies of to-day can only say it was a *religious* reformation that Luther had supremely at heart. But what is religion? Must not our very concern for truth and justice lead us to disown religion as thus understood? The only religion a free man could care anything about would involve taking up the cause which Luther practically deserted, and striving to usher in an era of social righteousness on the earth—doing so, that is, with the feeling that we are bound to do so, that the world and the invisible necessity of things call us to the work.

Who are preparing the way for such a religion, as much needed now as ever it was in the days of feudal and ecclesiastical oppression? If you doubt it, listen to the bitter cry of the outcast poor in Protestant London; listen to the cry of the poor in all our Protestant cities; listen to the cry of the poor in Chicago. Not Protestants as such, not Christians as such, not ministers and Churches as such, are preparing the way for such a religion, but they who, anywhere or under any name, utter or listen to a call of justice. Now and then a man dares

[1] *History of the Reformation*, iii. 181.

[1] *Contemporary Review*, August, 1883.
[2] Dr. William Rein's *Life of Luther*, p. 124.

lift up his voice against unprincipled wealth and power; now and then a man utters his belief that unselfishness may be lived, and not only dreamed of; now and then a demand is heard that public ends be put above private ends, in politics, business, everywhere; now and then the community is appealed to, to regard no slightest interest of its humblest member as outside the realm of its rightful concern. Heard now and then are these voices—heard in the street, heard in the secular newspaper, heard when companies of reformers come together; and, though they say not one word of religion, they are the voices in our night that tell of the coming day; they are the witnesses to an unbelieving age of an ideal truth and an ideal authority; and that wherein Luther and Protestantism and Christianity have failed shall be their success and their triumph.

XII.

THE BASIS OF THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT

THE Ethical Movement has a serious aim. It is not a literary movement; nor is it primarily a philosophical movement. It does not aim at culture, in the ordinary sense of the word. A wider knowledge of man and of the best products of the human spirit—that is very desirable, but it does not make our central aim. We want to touch the springs of man's moral life, to influence character and conduct. Our aim is moral culture; and it is natural that I should try to answer the question, On what basis does such a movement rest; what is our starting-point, what is the immovable rock on which we plant our feet?

First, I must frankly say that the Ethical Movement does not find a sure basis in the great religions that have come down to us, nor even in the rationalised forms of them that are becoming more or less current. There is no occasion for jeers and gibes at Judaism and Christianity. They are not aliens, but in the order of history—the ancestry from which we have sprung, the mother of us all. Taunts are sometimes directed against them as if the human mind were not responsible for them, as if they were imported from without or had descended ready-made from heaven. But this is a shallow view, and really proceeds from the standpoint of the religions themselves. The truth is that mankind has developed its own religious beliefs; that neither God nor devil revealed them; and hence that to ridicule them in a wholesale way is to ridicule the human mind itself. Nonetheless are the old beliefs inadequate to our present light and knowledge. Though it is simply one stage of human culture succeeding another and lower stage, the transition is so great as to amount to a revolution. To go straight to the heart of the matter, men have heretofore conceived of the Supreme Power of the world as a personal being like themselves; and they have had so slight a notion of the order of nature and the fixity of nature's laws that they have thought they might pray to him and ask him to do for them what they could not do for themselves. Many to-day, on the other hand, owing partially to the influence of philosophical criticism and partly to that of positive science, are constrained to regard the personality of Deity as an

open question, and prayer as a useless expenditure of human energy. Personality is a conception borrowed from our experience in connection with human beings; it may be questioned whether we have a right to apply it to what is beyond all experience, unless it be by way of metaphor or figure of speech—as we may speak of the unknown mystery as a sun, or as light or life. Theology is simply turning poetry into prose. That unseen Power by which we live is greater than all our figures of speech, outshines our most brilliant metaphor—is, indeed, light unapproachable, unthinkable. Prayer seems almost a belittling of that solemn mystery in the bosom of which we and this wide world rest. For it is not, let me distinctly say, in the name of materialism or phenomenalism, but because of a deeper sense of that mystery, that I abandon prayer. At the same time that we are less able to make dogmatic assertions respecting the unknown, we are learning, and are able to assert, more and more in the field of the known. A vision of law and order is dawning upon us; the sphere of caprice is diminishing and vanishing before our eyes; a conception of the universe is developing which, if it has less fascination for a childish mind, has infinitely more, and is unspeakably grander to the thoughtful and mature. Arbitrary will, purposes that change and bend, these may be in man, but they are not in nature; they are not in that ultimate and total order of things of which man and nature are parts. We may pray to our fellow-men, we may appeal to one another to respond to our varying wishes and wants; but prayer to the Unknown God involves a double vice—first, distrust of the beneficence of that order through which he is already manifested, and which holds fast whether we pray or not; second, a despair of our ability to act as proximate causes and to bring about the results we wish ourselves.

Such, very hastily expressed, are the results to which modern thought is leading some reflecting and earnest men at the present time. It is because the rationalised forms of the old religions do not make room for those who fearlessly and frankly accept these results that their fellowship is too narrow for me. For with much of the work of liberal Christianity and reformed Judaism it is impossible not to sympathise. They have battled with and left behind many old and outworn notions and forms; they have tried to reconcile reason with religion, and freedom with a spiritual faith. But they have not gone far enough with their rationalism. I find fault with them, not for what they have done, but for what they now seem unwilling to do. Liberal Christians, for example, no longer believe in the three persons of the old theology, but they seem to cling with no less energy to the doctrine of one person. Judaism has from the beginning tenaciously held to this doctrine. Do we now and then, perhaps, hear that this must not be taken literally and dogmatically; that it is only poetic personification that is had in mind; that the term "God," as ordinarily used, is but a metaphor? But how much seriousness are we to attribute to such explanations when the old forms, that have their meaning only in connection with the old ideas, are persisted in? Is it child's play which I am witnessing when, after the concession that "God" may be but a metaphor, I hear a solemn address to him, or a solemn benediction invoked from him upon the people? Which word, indeed, of the preacher or rabbi shall I believe? which does he really mean? Or is it possible that religion—which is, one would suppose, the sincere, the utterly truthful attitude of the soul before what is highest and best to it—is ceasing to be, and men are contenting themselves with shifts and compromises and the use of words with double meanings? Hear, too, what is said and then done in regard to prayer. He would be a foolish man nowadays who would ignore or deny the reign of law in the world; and the liberal pulpit recognises and teaches it. The bearing

of it upon prayer is also shown, and we are told that prayer cannot change or suspend the divine laws, but only bring us into conformity with them; and straightway we hear not only an address to deity, but an appeal that he will bless our community and our families, that he will heal the sick and defend the poor—all which involve a practical denial of the view presented in the discourse. Meanwhile the community continues unblessed, and the sick are not healed, and the poor are defenceless; and, in the name of truth, I ask would it not be better for the pulpit to address its entreaties to the men and women in the pews, and say that *to them* are trusted the care of the community and the guardianship of their families; *to them* is the sacred task committed of going out and healing the sick and raising up the unfortunate; *to them*, in their laws and in their businesses, is the work given of establishing justice for the poor? Oh for a wave of seriousness to sweep through the Churches!

Yes, for myself, not merely the rationalised forms of Christianity and Judaism, but religion itself, as it is popularly understood, does not give an absolutely sure basis on which to stand. Religion, in the popular sense, hinges on faith in God, Prayer, and Immortality. I do not, indeed, forget that there is a wider sense of the word "religion"—a sense that would give a place to Buddhism, which at its inception was without any of the beliefs already named, and would include any system which sets a supreme ideal before the human mind and prescribes a rule for its attainment; and further, I do not conceal my own faith that out of a fresh sense of the demands of morality upon us, out of a new contact with the higher ideal tendencies of the world, there will dawn upon us and burn into us a new conviction as to life, its meaning and its issue—a new sense of a world-purpose and a world-goal. But now, and at the start, our word is a simple one. We do not propound new views of the universe. We wish rather a new sense of duty; we wish to throw ourselves into the stream of moral progress. We need not ask how it is there; we need not peer down along its course to catch a glimpse of the sea into which it flows. We want to throw ourselves into it and bathe in it, because we know it is good; because, when we have so much as touched our feet or hands to it, we have experienced its sweetness and felt the life and quickness of its waters; we want to because, we are parched and dry, and there is only an arid waste around us.

But if not the current religious doctrines,[1] is it perhaps science, or that philosophic attitude of much of modern science known as agnosticism, which is to furnish a basis for the new movement? This seems to be the impression of many; we will accept nothing, as they think, which we cannot scientifically demonstrate. There is a certain amount of truth in this impression. One should be hospitable to all the results of scientific demonstration; one should cling to no old-time belief against which there is a balance of scientific evidence. I am myself in sympathy with the methods of modern science, and with agnosticism, which, instead of affirming positive knowledge, is a confession of what we do not and cannot know. Kant in the last century and Herbert Spencer in this were perhaps the first to draw the line clearly between the realm of the known and knowable and that of the unknowable. Knowledge is limited to experience; what is beyond experience may be guessed, imagined, or thought about; but in the nature of the case no guess or imagination or thought can be verified, and thus converted into scientific knowledge. This critical distinction has undermined the very foundations of theological dogmatism, and has taught

[1] It must not be understood that we thereby propose a negative dogmatism, and would exclude those who believe in the "current religious doctrines"; we differ from the Churches simply in not requiring assent to them, in not putting them at the basis of the Ethical Movement.

to philosophers as well as theologians a long-needed lesson of modesty and humility.

All this, however, is very different from regarding agnosticism or positive science as the *basis* of our movement. In the new and clear atmosphere of modern thought, many of us have seen the old "castles in the air" vanish from our view; one by one they have seemed to lose their basis in this world of experience in which we live. But an atmosphere is hardly a thing on which to build—it is at best a transparent medium through which, and by the light of which, we may discover the real foundations. Agnosticism is no more than a confession of the *limitations* of our knowledge. But what we do not know is hardly a basis for action. Simply because men no longer believe in the old dogmas is no reason why they should form an Ethical Society. There are plenty of agnostics who have little sympathy with us, whose unbelief may, perhaps, extend to the foundations of morality as well as to those of theology, and who may live simply lives of supercilious and refined egotism. Agnosticism is but the dry light of the intellect, which may be used to the noblest ends, but may also be perverted to the meanest. Nor is science, teaching us positively what we do know, a sufficient guide for us. I will yield to none in my admiration and wonder before the world which science has revealed to us. How has space widened and time grown infinite, and how does one law seem to hold in its grasp the mighty movements of systems and the least tear that trickles down a child's face! It is a *universe*, majestic, solemn, in the midst of which we live, and it would seem to suggest to us great and solemn thoughts as to what our own lives should be. But when I turn from nature to consider human life and the order of human society, my reverence in one way lessens rather than grows deeper. The science that reports faithfully, philosophically, the varied facts of our human existence is not altogether a pleasant page to read. History, which is one branch of the science of man, tells of animalism, of brutal selfishness, of towering wrongs, of slow-returning justice, often of a blind, infuriated justice that punishes the innocent and leaves the guilty free. And observation—statistics, which is nothing else than scientific observation—reveals almost as many things that ought not to be as things which should be. Statistics of crime are just as much science as would be statistics of peace and order; statistics of prostitution as truly scientific as those of family purity; of poverty as truly as those of comfort and competence. What science teaches must invariably be accepted as fact; but it may, nonetheless, provoke moral repulsion and rebellion. We may say to some of the facts: "You have no right to be!" Yes, the very end of our scientific observation may sometimes be to render such observation in the future impossible—that is, to destroy the facts. Plainly, then, science is not ultimate. It tells us simply what is; it tells us nothing of what ought to be. What ought to be—that is reported to us by a higher faculty than that of scientific observation; it is an assertion, a demand of the conscience.

Here, then, is, to my mind, the true basis of our movement. Not the old religions; not religion itself, in the popular understanding of that term; not agnosticism—though, as matter of fact, some of us may be agnostics; not science, though the facts of science, every one of them, should have our recognition. It is something deeper and more ancient, I might say, than any of these; it is the rock of conscience, the eternal laws that announce themselves in man's moral nature. Our knowledge may be limited to the senses; but conscience is not knowledge, for knowledge is of what is, and conscience is the thought of what ought to be. It may be that our senses have never revealed to us a perfectly just man; that we have never known or heard of an absolutely just government. Nonetheless does con-

science say to every man: "Thou oughtest to be just!" And if it could find voices clear and strong enough, it would publish aloud to every community and every State to-day: "There is no other law for you save that of absolute justice, and, in the measure that you fail therein, you have no sanctity and no defence." Conscience, in a word, ushers us into an ideal realm. Genuine ethics has in this respect more in common with art than with science. For true art, I take it, is not minute, painstaking photography; it does not consist in rendering an object in the terms of the senses unilluminated by the mind, but in catching the idea of the object, so that in witnessing the picture or the statue we seem to feel the flush of the artist's thought, and are touched with the inspiration wherewith he conceived and wrought. If the great master, Shakespeare, said that the object of his art was simply "to hold the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," I must say that ethics is an art of very different character. It holds up the mirror, not of the actual, but of the ideal—that mirror whereby we feel vice to be vice, and know virtue to be virtue, and by which we judge the age and body of the time, and declare what its form and pressure ought to be. It is ideal rather than realistic art to which I would compare ethics, the art revealed in the matchless bearing of an Apollo, in the divine grace of a Venus of Milo, in the majesty of an Angelo's Moses, in the radiant freshness of a Raphael's Madonna. These are human, and yet they are more than human; for the artist's thought of the perfect has worked in them, and we feel in looking at them a reflection of that "light which never was on land or sea." Art is the realisation of the beautiful; ethics means the realisation of the good. As we look on men and women, we see the possibilities of the perfect that are in them; we think of what they are meant to be, rather than of what they are. We are to regard ourselves and society about us as plastic material, in which the divine ideas of goodness have begun to take form, but have never reached adequate form, and are so hemmed and hindered that, if we judged with the senses alone, we might doubt if they existed, and yet to the eye of the soul are still there, and need only to be seen and believed in to again stir and move, and to shape human life to finer forms and nobler issues.

Who, as he looks on the face of human society, can be content with what he sees there? Who does not find his notions of justice, of humanity, of the brotherhood in which men ought to live, contradicted? Who, with a conscience or a heart, has not felt that this system of things, in which self-interest is not only the impulse, but the rule; in which we consider not so much the rights or claims of men as the extent to which they may serve us and contribute to our own gains; in which any means, any oppression, any grinding down that do not involve open violence or fraud are viewed as legitimate, and something which any one must practise because all do—who, I say, has not felt that this system of things, even though he be a partner in it, is wrong, and longed, as a man in thick darkness longs for light, for some other order of things, in which he should not be compelled to beat back the best and purest impulses of his nature? The social questions are *the* questions of the day. And the social questions are fundamentally moral questions; they involve the relations of man to man, and morality is nothing but an ideal of what the relation between man and man should be. Not the smallest subject, or the merest detail of it, bearing on the rights of human beings is out of the province of a moral teacher. Morality is as wide as humanity; it has a bearing on the whole life of humanity; it demands nothing less than that every man have at least the means and opportunity for a truly human life. Material interests have a sanctity if they are human interests; the question of wages

has a moral bearing if wages mean the substratum of food and drink and clothing and shelter on which a human being is to build up his higher existence. Education has a moral bearing: the devising and putting into operation a rational and human scheme of education is one of the moral problems of the time. Politics has a moral bearing: the State has no other end than justice and the general good, and justice and the general good are a demand of morality. "Political" life should mean public life—the abandonment of private interests or class interests, and the dedication of one's self to public interests. I know not, indeed, on what department or phase of life to cast a glance and find that morality has no bearing there. Morality is not a suppliant, a beggar asking for an entrance and protection in one corner of our existence; it is a sovereign, and, though it be unheard and unnoticed, prescribes the law and ideal for the whole. It has a bearing on the intellect, and condemns the conscienceless interpretations of great doctrines, the clever playing with words not uncommon in some of our Churches. It has a bearing on our domestic life, forbidding that anyone should be a slave there. It has a bearing on our pleasures, on our business, on the conduct of the State. It is, indeed, an invisible companion cleaving to us wherever we go, rising, as a great Englishman[1] has said, with us in the morning and going to rest with us at night, and only leaving us as we leave the light of life. A companion do I say? Ah, it is closer than any companion, for, though it warns us and commands us, it does so in that supreme act in which we warn and command ourselves; it is the utterance of the God in us, of the "prophetic soul" in which we all share, and signifies that we are part and parcel of another order of things than that which we can see and handle, and are rooted in somewhat firmer than the earth, and more ancient, more venerable than the heavens. To get a new sense of this inward monitor; to feel that its demands are beyond any mere traditional rules of goodness; that it means not this or that good thing, but all good; to have thus an infinite horizon open to our view, and to feel that a path of ceaseless progress lies before us—this is to me the aim and significance of the Ethical Movement.

I know the Churches speak sometimes of "mere morality," and ask if that can save a man. I answer readily that a surface, mechanical morality, no matter by whom practised, does not and cannot save a man. But if so, the call in my judgment is not for something to take the place of morality, but for a larger, a more perfect morality, one covering the whole of life, and allowing no nook or corner of it to lie outside of the sacred sway of the just and the good. It is a higher standard of righteousness which the world needs, one which shall convict even the religions of the day of the lowness of their own standards; which shall awaken the slumbering consciences of men, and regenerate life, private and social. If the Churches had the idea of morality as a principle, would they dare to speak of it in this slighting way? No; by morality they mean custom or tradition, or at best a set of commands given by Moses or Jesus, and written down in a book. That it is an independent idea and law of man's own mind, prior to all custom and tradition and books and persons, and so capable of superseding them all and making them antiquated, is hardly imagined. But it is nothing else than this that I mean by proposing the pure dictates of conscience as the basis of our movement. We assert the independence of morality. We do not rest on dogma, because there is something in man closer and more constitutional to him than dogma; we do not rest on history, because we believe that within man lie the springs of history, and that history's grandest movements started from no inspiration that we cannot draw on equally well to-day. The

[1] Gladstone, *Vatican Decrees*, § 4.

modern world talks of progress: we believe in moral progress, that the ideas of righteousness are not stationary, but capable of endless expansion; that there can be no final statement of ethics; that men may get scruples in the future that they have no thought of now; that, for example, a sense of justice may develop that will make our present manner of conducting business and industry a reproach and a shame.

It is a word of this sort which I should like to throw out among men and women of to-day. It is a new centre of interest, a new basis of union, that we have to propose. The old religions, and Liberalism in its present forms, rest on other issues. Judaism is a race religion—a pure, a lofty religion, but still a race religion. Christianity is more universal, but it is founded on and limited by Jesus of Nazareth; and, though I will not be surpassed in genuine reverence for that unique figure, that image of blended majesty and gentleness which has cast a light down the centuries, and has rarely been without influence, even when Christians were maddest and most bigoted, truth equally compels the admission that Jesus does not furnish a basis broad enough and large enough for the present and coming time. Yes, Jesus himself rests upon a deeper foundation in the reason and conscience of man; and on that bottom rock we may stand to-day as truly as he stood, and may build upon it as serenely, with as undaunted a faith and as firm a hope as ever he or his followers did eighteen hundred years ago. No more satisfactory is ordinary Liberalism. It is still largely critical; it is often but a wild and bitter attack on the old religions; it is at best a calm and clear perception that the old religions are no longer possible to us; it is not seldom coupled with indifference to moral questions, and, where it is zealous, its zeal must often be confessed to be on the wrong side. I believe the future is for those who have cut loose from the old-time forms and creeds, and who have no patience with them. But their impatience must go further; they must become impatient with themselves and with the moral state of the community; they must turn a deaf and relentless ear to all the siren calls that would confound liberty with licence; they must rather own the call of stricter rules, of higher ideals of duty, and feel that, with the old citadels of faith in ruins at their feet, their work has but begun. It is to earnest and brave-hearted men and women who will turn their faces in this direction that the Ethical Movement addresses itself.

For let me make clear that the basis of our movement is not a theory of morality, but morality itself. The moral teacher is not primarily to give a metaphysical philosophy of ethics, to propagate transcendentalism or utilitarianism—though he may have views of his own, and on occasion need not refrain from expressing them.[1] He desires rather, if he can, to hold up the idea of the good itself; to make men love it for its own sake, and own its beauty in the conduct, in the beautiful order and beneficence, of their lives. There is but one theory of morals against which I have any feeling, and this not because it is a theory, but because it is subversive of morality itself. I mean the view which we now and then hear advocated, that morality is but a refined selfishness, a long-sighted prudence; that the end of life is and can be

[1] I may be permitted to quote the following notable words of the late lamented Professor T. H. Green, of Oxford, which I have come upon since writing the above:—

"It is probable, indeed, that every movement of religious reform has originated in some clearer conception of the ideal of human conduct, arrived at by some person or persons—a conception, perhaps, towards which many men have been silently working, but which finally finds in some one individual the character which can give decisive practical expression to it. But in the initiation of religious reforms the new theory of the ideal, as a theory, always holds a secondary place. It is not absent, but it is, so to speak, absorbed in a character—a character to which the speculative completeness of the theory is of little interest; and it is this character which gives the new conception of the ideal its power in the world" (*Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 361).

nowhere else than in the accumulation of individual pleasures, and the avoidance of individual pains. That man cannot go out of himself; that he cannot love another equally with himself; that he cannot find an end of his being in his family, in the community, in the State; that for all these he cannot live, and cannot die rather than see them dishonoured—that is what I call the real infidelity, and, whether uttered by priest or philosopher, has, and always shall have, my dissent and my rebuke. Morality *is* this going out of one's self and living in, living for, something larger. Prudence, selfishness—these are and may well be the servants, the attendants on morality; they never dare take the place of masters. Aside from this, which is not a theory but a statement of morality, a moral teacher need have little to say, at least at the start, of the philosophy of ethics. It is something far more primary and simple than philosophy, even the truest, that must be our immediate concern. It is the practically proving to the world that morality is an adequate foundation for our lives; it is the demonstrating that unselfishness can be by showing it; yes, it is, I sincerely hope and trust, proving that a higher morality is possible than the world now allows—proving it by the stricter purity of our private lives, by higher notions of honour in our business or professional relations, by juster conduct to our employees; yes, by a new wave of sympathy and humanity that shall take us out of ourselves and out of our business, and make us bear the burdens of the sick and the poor and the forlorn in our community as they have never been borne before.

XIII.

THE SUPREMACY OF ETHICS

WHEN all else that the religious world holds dear falls or becomes uncertain, confidence in duty may remain unshaken. One may doubt all the articles of the Christian creed, and have much pain in doing so, yet never be confused, never have shame; but to doubt that love and truth and honour are binding upon us is so unnatural that it can only be accounted for on the supposition of some moral obliquity. These moral laws of our being are so close and constitutional to us that the very existence of virtue is bound up with a recognition of them. A man is virtuous on principle, or he is not virtuous at all, though he may conform to all the external requirements of virtue; and if there is no principle, no sovereign *ought*, constraining, commanding, and forbidding, there is no morality. Morality is not a matter of taste, of personal preference, or of temperament; it is obedience to a command, it is self-surrender to the OUGHT that sounds within us, it is the free choice of what we cannot avoid choosing without shame and dishonour.

> "If that fail,
> The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble."

The Ethical Movement, as I understand it, plants itself on this ultimate crowning fact of man's nature. We start with a certainty. Human beings do not choose the sovereign laws of duty and make them laws. Those laws would be over us did we not choose them; they rather choose us. Man no more creates the moral world of obligation than he does the physical one of fact;

he has only to fit himself into it, and let its sublimity make him sublime. Man is not the summit of things; as the heavens bend over his body and the stars unalterably shine, so the moral law arches over the soul of man, and he is greatest as he bends in lowly worship to it. Nobleness, magnanimity, great-hearted love, unswerving truth—these are not ours, but we are theirs, bound to them as the iron to the magnet, as the needle to the star, as the tides to the "far-off orb" of heaven; bound to them, that is, in idea, and should be in fact.

Great and reassuring are the lessons of the moral sentiment. It gives us a place whereon to plant our feet. It casts out fear. See how it deals with the fear of so many anxious minds that, in face of modern conditions, not only Christianity, but religion itself, will pass away from the world. We live in an age of transition, and all the way from the Catholic to the Unitarian there are mutterings and tremblings, as if, in case this or that or the other creed loses its hold on man, the stays and consolations of human life will be gone. Idle fears! Religion, so far as it has not been the outgrowth and blossoming of the moral sentiment, has been at best an expensive luxury to the race, and has come near to being a curse. That man's peace and happiness and safety depend upon beings whose favour must be gained by costly sacrifices and prayers—this belief, that made the basis of primitive religion, and survives in all the great branches of the Christian Church, has caused more distress of mind, more false torments of conscience, more waste of energy, moral and material, than we can ever calculate or dream of. Religion—the thought of it in the past, I mean—is only endurable to the free man and earnest lover of his kind as moral elements have been taken up into it and an end has been made of sacrifices; as the prayers have come to be prayers for righteousness—or else have ceased altogether before the stern determination to be righteous at whatever cost; as religion has come to *mean* righteousness, and the will of God has been identified with the good of man. But the moral sentiment that has played such a transforming and revolutionary part in the field of religion in the past is still with us; it was never more alive than to-day. It is born into the world with every child; it is as fresh as if this were creation's morn. It is that from which we cannot get away, in regard to which scepticism is absurd, and out of which, in conjunction with modern culture, shall come, I believe, a nobler religion than the world has ever known before.

The depths, not of fear, but of awe, were never stirred in man till he felt the sublime promptings of the OUGHT within him. The ancient gods or goddesses were never truly reverend and august till they were regarded as the authors of the pure and high commands that give the law to man's life and conduct; and, so far as they were interpreted in this way, they must always be revered. The moral sentiment blossoms as naturally into a religious faith as the buds of spring open out into leaf or flower. A man may give up all that passes current as religion—give up God and Immortality and Prayer (in the customary sense), as well as the claims of the Church or of Jesus; yet, if he keep his hold on morality, if he bend before Truth and Justice and Love, if he feel there is something sovereign within him which it were better to die than to forget, he is on the open highway that leads to those grand confidences and trusts that are the imperishable part of religion.

For the sense of morality is the sense of somewhat sacred, holy; it is the sense of a law above all other laws. There is not a law of nature that may not conceivably be altered or suspended, or that we may not violate or defy, should duty command. We use nature every day—her forces, her laws, we are for ever turning to account. We cannot worship nature or the sum of nature's powers. That sovereign allegiance and fealty we owe to what is absolutely inviolable, to

what we dare not use, to what exists for its own sake, and we for it, to Goodness, to Love, to eternal Truth. The moral sentiment dwarfs nature; it goes out to that which is beyond nature. What is regnant in the universe is no fact, nor sum of facts; no law in the actual sense, nor sum of laws, but a *commandment*. And the deepest, the bottom thing in the universe must be that which is capable of giving a commandment: not matter, then, nor force, nor will, but reason, or that ineffable reality of which human reason is a poor and shadowy suggestion. Matter is phenomenal; our thoughts come and go, our acts are ill-matched even with our thoughts; but that to which our thoughts aspire, and from which, alas! they so often wander, does not change with our changing, does not rise when we rise, or fall when we fall; though we die, though the wide earth and the everlasting hills fade away into insubstantial mist, and the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, lives for ever! Without morality and the infinite suggestions it makes, worship could not find an object, and the word "adorable" would have to pass out of literature—and this, though so-called religious men at the present day have such partial conceptions of morality that they contrast religion with it, and speak of something above morality, and in addition to ethics plead for devotional truths as well. Something above justice and goodness! —there is nothing above. Devotional truth in addition to ethics!—'tis the merest sentimentality. Religion has had connected with it much besides ethics in the past; it has been weighted with blood and with lust, and to-day it is weighted with unreality and maudlin sentiment and cant. But, so far as it has had more, it has been a disturber, and full of harm to men; and so far as it has more to-day, being no longer taken seriously, it is at best a superfluity which self-respecting men and women are apt to do without. Duty is ordinarily divided into duties to man and duties to God. But there are no duties to God in the sense implied, nor have we reason to suppose that God, as so conceived, exists. "God" is the infinite element in all duty, its eternal basis, without which duty and man and the world would alike disappear.

And what an aim does ethics give to man! With what solemnity does it invest our life! We are here to lift ourselves to the measure of perfect goodness; society exists to lift itself to perfect justice. Life is not for living merely, but for living so that somewhat divine may be incorporated into it. How low men's thoughts ordinarily are! Religion itself sometimes takes sides with the world as it is, and distrusts reform. How many in his Church to-day would hear Jesus, should he come again enraptured with his thought of a coming kingdom of God? Was ever Socialist so wild and visionary as he? Carlyle used to say there was properly no religion in England. A stern saying; but when we remember how stern a thing religion is (or it is nothing)—when we remember the fact of absolute obligation which is its essence, and ask ourselves how many men and women in our own country live invisibly bound to truth and honour and justice, we cannot deny all credence to the saying, and may ask ourselves, Are we, in America, much better off? Our own Emerson spoke nearly fifty years ago of "the universal decay, and now almost death, of faith in society." The Church, he declared, "had lost its grasp on the affection of the good and the fear of the bad."[1] It is as if Christianity had at last got itself well lodged in this world, and had forgotten its dream of another. Yet its dream of another, its vision of a perfect society that should replace the present order based so largely on selfishness and cruelty and wrong, was at the beginning its very inspiration and life. Hence its high demands, its seemingly impracticable precepts; hence its enthusiasm, that swept through an old decaying society like fire, destroying and recreating. There is little of this enthusiasm now.

[1] Divinity School Address, 1838.

You cannot have enthusiasm and commonplace aims. Enthusiasm is born of an idea, and idealism is at a low ebb among the Churches. There is probably more idealism outside the Church than within it; it is born in mangers again, and makes its home in despised social reformers, among men who cannot live and see the world go on as it is. The trouble, on the other hand, with our social reform is that it does not start from within, that it is partial, that its aims are not severe and grand enough; and so its enthusiasm is finite, and does not reach the depths of man. Not resentment and not wrath, but the moral sentiment, must give anew the aim to human life. Once more must the call go forth for a perfect life; once more must it be brought home to man that not food nor raiment nor shelter, not comfort nor ease, not science nor art, are the end of existence, but the "kingdom of God"; and that this is not only the end, but the beginning, since without justice and human sympathy science and art may minister to vice as well as virtue, and not even comfort or daily bread is necessarily within the reach of all. Louise Michel, predicting the outcome of the social revolution, says that man, having at last attained his plenitude, being no longer hungry nor cold, nor afflicted by any of the miseries of the present time, will be good.[1] I see not one ray of hope for humanity in such a philosophy. The tendency of the evolutionary doctrine is, to a certain extent, to hold justice impracticable, save in an ideal state of society. But justice is commanded, and is the only thing that is practicable now or in any state of society. Goodness is the sovereign law of life, first as well as last; it is sovereign *over* life, as even Patagonian Indians may feel—three of whom, Darwin tells us, once allowed themselves to be shot, one after the other, rather than betray their companions in war.[2] I look for the social reformer who shall appeal to the sublime in man; who shall be able to hold a savage, angry mob in check, and make them more willing to die than to do wrong; and who shall pierce with the power of his convictions through the lying and sophistical selfishness of the prosperous, and make them own with trembling the law they now defy, and by his persuasiveness entreat them and woo them, so that with tears and penitent gladness they will do tasks of love and tenderest goodwill. Such social reform will be religion once more on the face of the earth; such a reformer will be another Christ, come with his solemn purity, his high faith, his unconquerable love, to shame and to heal the world.

What power, what omnipotence, will come in that day to our poor old human nature—poor now only because it will not surrender itself to the moral sentiment, because it will not unlock its heart and receive of the infinite riches of justice and love that lie for ever waiting and even knocking at the door! The moral sentiment is deliverance; it is the open door to infinite power. When, in answer to the inner imperative, man obeys, he is rejuvenated, and feels the freshness of an eternal day in his heart and through all the arteries of his being. There is no age to the spirit that lives in high sentiments. "Always young for liberty," exclaimed Dr. Channing. The faith born of ethics is that man *can* do the right. The imperative itself brings the power to meet it. To say that duty commands us, but that we cannot obey, is to suppose a lie in the nature of things. There is no duty if I cannot perform it. And as duty exists and charms and binds me, I know I *can* do it. The will is not bound. Men say we are born selfish, avaricious, lustful, and cannot be otherwise. You can be; and the first thing is to feel in your heart of hearts that you *ought* to be—and the iron weight of that obligation felt in your inmost soul will transform you and give you its iron strength. Yet how the religion of the day travesties our nature! Not only does orthodoxy teach

[1] *Chicago Times*, February 14th, 1885.
[2] *Descent of Man*, p. 111, *n.*

the impotency of man, but Liberal Christianity teaches the necessity of prayer, which comes to the same thing—saying that we poor creatures are weak and must have help. But Emerson answers: "Such as you are, the gods themselves could not help you." Again; "The weight of the universe is pressed down on the shoulders of each moral agent to hold him to his task. The only path of escape known in all the worlds of God is performance."[1] There is a breath as of mountain air in such words—invigoration and re-invigoration for the moral life of man, and the secret of regeneration for religion, which, as Emerson says, now effeminates and demoralises. It is a sublime faith that, whatever the outward seeming, man is made for the good; that, starting imperfect, he is called to be perfect; that society and all the races of men have the way open to an infinite goal, which they will fail to reach only if they do not will to. What is wanting in us, what is wanting in society, is not the power, but the will, to do and dare and suffer. The wide earth might be a scene of justice to-morrow, and every city of our land transformed into a City of the Light, if men and women would wake with to-morrow's sun to will the good which now lies like a half-formed vision in their minds.

It is thus that the moral sentiment gives a great peace to the soul. Things often seem so bad about us that we are tempted to think evil cleaves to the nature of things. With all the boasted progress of the modern world in industry and inventions, things seem little better for the mass of men. The spectacle of debasement and misery among large classes in the very centres of our civilisation and culture is almost maddening to a sensitive nature, and easily breeds despair. If all this suffering and wrong are necessary, there is no escape from the conclusion that this is a black and cruel world we live in; and the only way to live and to have any contentment is to harden one's heart and keep out of suffering one's self. But suffering and wrong are not necessary; they might as well not be as be—nay, they never would be if men listened to the promptings from on high that visit them. Suffering and wrong are foreign to the nature of things; they are contradictory to it, they exist despite it. The heart of the world is sound; and would we but give way to it in our own hearts, the face of society might be as fair as nature is in her most joyous moods. We have not to make the *world* anew, but only ourselves. In the midst of our work we can adore, and pass into that central peace which laps the world about, and which all our heat and worry cannot disturb, nor man's extremest faithlessness mar. If man does not do the good, *he* cannot have peace—that is all. An ethical religion is nowise concerned with the justification of the order of society as it is; it has little in common with the weak optimism that sometimes passes current as religion; it must oppose those canting economists who say that, there being no such thing as chance, the Christian must regard present social conditions as the best possible, else they would not be consistent with the orderings of a wise Providence. If a man is given a task, and is not faithful to it, the result cannot be the best possible. The integrity and sanity of things nowise requires a justification of the present order of things. The high God commands to almost all the mighty of this world, and to many more besides, to do differently from what they do; and as long as they do not obey, they are off the track appointed for them, and the integrity of things is only concerned in forever bringing them to nought. Where did Jesus find peace as he confronted the order of society in his day? In the thought of a judgment that should destroy it. O friend, curse thyself, curse thy neighbour and society about thee, but not the fundamental arrangement of things!—bless that; thou canst not dream so high as it makes possible. Heard already are the

[1] "Worship," in *Conduct of Life*.

voices which, if thou and all wouldst hear, the dread chaos and anarchy that now dishearten thee would pass away.

Out of all this high spirit of faith and obedience, and as the issue of it all, is bred a great hope. Our current doctrine of immortality is weak; it has little moral fibre in it. That august possibility for valorous and virtuous souls is made the property of all alike; and no drivelling saint or damnable sinner but imagines he or she is going to live again, and live for ever. There was never such effrontery. We have reason to believe there is another life, if there are souls worthy of it. The mystery is that wicked, frivolous, selfish men and women live out their natural term of life here; the gods are surely gracious and long-suffering to permit it; and, when death brings to an end their vain career, it would seem the part of piety to let them rest in eternal forgetfulness. But for the good the heart conjectures a better fate. The good are simply those who respond to the demands which the invisible world makes upon them. They only are good who are so because they must be, because a divine necessity constrains them, because they could not hold up their heads if they were unfaithful, because in such a case they would feel like traitors to the trust the universe had assigned to them. The value of a faithful soul is beyond all estimation. Duty is that by which we link ourselves to absolute being, and by which absolute being links itself in turn to us. Perishing man looks aloft and sees the imperishable, and with every moral act the imperishable becomes a part of him. No atom, no tree, no animal, no man incapable of self-surrender, has this worth and incomparable dignity. The stars in heaven are not so grand as man, living in obedience to the moral sentiment, and dying when it is "better not to live." Yet there is no caste in virtue. In this lore, in this imperishable wealth, the great of this world have no monopoly. The dignity that dignifies the highest is within reach of the lowliest. The savage Patagonian, the obscure reformer, martyrs and heroes who died in nooks and corners of the world, and all who loved and did the right, are the stars that shine in this firmament; and all others count for nothing. This world will pass away; the generations of men are going, and some time will all be gone; nothing in nature or that belongs to nature stays; there is nought permanent or everlasting outside the blessed Powers that are over all and in all. Yet a high presentiment arises in the breast that, out of all the countless personalities that have been or shall be born on "this bank and shoal of time," there shall be some accounted worthy to share with these blessed Powers their own eternity. Such a faith is too great for demonstration; it rests on the cumulative suggestions and inspirations of the moral sentiment. But it is that kind of immortality which has supreme interest for the morally serious man. That we are inherently immortal I can discover very little reason for supposing; that any authority, whether of holy book or holy Church, could settle the question for us seems like an offence to reason. Our personal affections and desires of reunion do not appear to be a solid foundation; Jesus says not a word in their favour, though he does speak of those who shall be "accounted *worthy* to attain to that world and the resurrection of the dead."[1] That science can ever give us proof of immortality seems improbable, since science, save in its purely formal aspects, deals with the sensible—that is, with what may be observed or experimented upon—and immortality is a truth, if it be one, of the super-sensible. The doubtful vistas of spiritualism make the other world but a poor faded copy of this, with immortal cats and dogs as well as human beings, until that life seems more feeble and ineffectual even than this. What reason for the perpetuation of an old worn-out show? For my part, I would rather leave death begirt with all its solemn and touching mystery, and

[1] Luke xx. 35.

simply trust that somehow transcendent issues will be worked out through it. There is no thought of reward for the good in what I say. As the good are so for goodness' sake, so their high destiny must come unbought and unsought.

Such are some of the lessons of the moral sentiment as they have made themselves felt in my own mental experience, and such is something of what I conceive would be the gist and scope of an ethical religion. Ethics is not a closed circle, so that when one has forborne to cheat and paid his debts he is at the end of it. It starts with the lowest uses of earth, but covers the highest and widest flights of the spirit of man. To plant oneself on the fundamental verity, and then allow its natural suggestions and implications to have an unhindered development in one's mind and in one's life, seems to me one of the most important and inspiring tasks of the present day.

What a prospect is that which Emerson held out! "There will be a new church," he said, "founded on moral science; at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the church of men to come, without shawms or psaltery or sackbut. But it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters, science for symbol and illustration; it will fast enough gather beauty, music, picture, poetry. Was never stoicism so stern and exigent as this shall be. It shall send man home to his central solitude, shame these social supplicating manners, and make him know that much of the time he must have himself to his friend. He shall expect no co-operation, he shall walk with no companion. The nameless Thought, the nameless Power, the superpersonal Heart—he shall repose alone on that. He needs only his own verdict. No good fame can help, no bad fame can hurt him. The laws are his consolers; the good laws themselves are alive—they know if he have kept them; they animate him with the leading of great duty and an endless horizon."[1]

XIV.

THE TRUE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS UNION[2]

It is one thing to express views freely, and another to propose them as a basis of religious union. This I am distinctly unwilling to do. To propose any new set of views as a part of the basis of religious fellowship would be so far to revive the intolerance of ancient orthodoxy.

I wish to ask now, What should make the fundamental terms of fellowship in a religious body? This is an entirely practical question, though I am aware that in trying to answer it I may develop an ideal of religious fellowship which has little or no relation to any existing religious movement.

In general, I conceive that assent should not be required in a religious body to any truth about which it is possible for a thoughtful and good man to doubt. The basis of fellowship should be so broad that no person striving for

[1] "Worship," in *Conduct of Life*. [2] Abridged.

an ideal order of human life should be excluded. Hence, assent to the doctrines of Catholic or Protestant Christianity, or even of pure theism, should not be required. No one will deny that serious and good men can, and in some cases do, question these doctrines. Shall they, therefore, be excluded from the most sacred of all unions between man and man? For my part, there is no materialist or atheist who yet loves and pursues the good, who feels that truth and honour bind him, whom I do not wish to call in the deepest and most sacred sense my brother.

The truth which it appears impossible to doubt is that *duty binds a man.* It is true that men may differ in their theories of the ultimate grounds of duty; but the fact of moral obligation and the broad outlines of personal and social duty remain under any theory. The truth is that the thought of what *ought* to be is as elemental a part of man's being as the sense of what *is.* The thought of the right is one that cannot be outgrown, that has entered into every religion worthy of our reverence, that even the savage has in some half-conscious, imperfect fashion, that man can lose only as he loses his reason. We cannot say, however, that the propositions of the Athanasian or even the Apostles' Creed are thus rooted in the nature of man; neither can this be said of the theistic or perhaps any distinct speculative doctrine. A true religious fellowship, then, would not oblige assent to any of these doctrines; it would require only the recognition that *duty binds a man.*

Positively speaking, the ideal religious body would be a union of all those who owned the authority of duty, and who sought to live as duty commands. The fellowship aimed at would be that of all good men—that is, of all striving to be good and to advance the cause of goodness in the world. For the omission of a doctrinal basis does not mean a "mush of concession," or the drowning of conscience in sentimentality. Not because one is a human being, but because he strives to realise the ideal of humanity in his life, and to contribute to the establishment of an ideal order of human life on the earth, should he be welcomed to the moral communion. Love cannot have fellowship with those who hate; just men cannot be joined in sacred union with tyrants and oppressors; men who are trying to lead pure lives cannot fraternise with those who are reckless and profligate. Conditional for admission must be the desire to purify oneself of all that is unworthy, to live according to one's best ideals. But other conditions should be unknown. One should not be obliged to confess himself a Christian, or to confess himself a Jew; the antagonisms of Protestant and Catholic, of Evangelical and Unitarian, should be forgotten; all barriers should pass away save those which conscience sets up.

I am aware that the realisation of such an ideal involves a great change in the habits and sentiments of men. It seems to be taken for granted that men who differ intellectually cannot belong to one fellowship, that varying theological or philosophical views are necessarily more potent to divide than moral aims can be to unite. It is a sad and saddening opinion; yet I am afraid there is more in the religious history of the race to confirm it than there is to encourage the aim I cherish. Never has there been, to my knowledge, such a fellowship as I crave. Men seem always to have been ready to magnify their intellectual agreements or disagreements, and to put a slight on the good purpose and the pure heart. History does not give much encouragement to such a fellowship as I propose; and, as with morality in general, the dream of a moral basis of religious union is an ideal of the heart rather than anything else. Yet it has on its side, I make bold to say, the best instincts of not a few men to-day: the larger minds in almost all the historic Christian communions are moving in this direction, though they may be far from having a clear vision as yet of the goal.

Let me now state a little more distinctly what a moral basis of fellowship would involve.

First, it would not necessitate the giving up of any theological or philosophical beliefs which one might hold dear. Because one's beliefs are not made a part of the bond of union does not mean that one shall not be free to hold them. If one found satisfaction in the theistic theory of the universe, he should be free to cherish it; if one felt compelled to be an agnostic as to the nature of Deity, or if one took materialistic ground, he should be equally free. The aim of the fellowship would not be to make theists or materialists or agnostics, but to confirm the good purpose in the soul, to make good citizens, good fathers and mothers, to make lovers of justice and haters of all wrong. If one wished to keep company only with those of his own creed, he would, of course, not enter the body; but the body would not exclude him: he would simply exclude himself. One would not have to renounce Christianity nor Judaism in entering the fellowship; his entering would simply involve a willingness to live on terms of brotherhood with others who might not be Christians or Jews—that is, he would give up Christianity or Judaism as the basis of religious fellowship.

Secondly, the free expression of theological or philosophical opinions would not be prevented. It might even happen that those who were drawn together by the affinity of intellectual conviction would form subordinate groups, just as those who were united in holding to certain practical solutions of the problem of society might do the same. The only necessity would be that no group should make so much of its peculiar views and aims that it would be in danger of losing sympathy and the sense of union with the body at large. One fellowship with many branches, one body with many members, one subtle life-blood running through the whole and making every part kin to every other — that would be the ideal of a true religious fellowship.

Hence, thirdly, a new meaning would attach to heresy in connection with such a fellowship. That word, I well know, is no longer covered with opprobrium. Men who have stood faithful to the light that was in them, and have refused for the sake of life itself to be untrue to it, have made heresy almost glorious. Apart, however, from its historical associations, the meaning of heresy is simply separation: a heretic is one who is separated, or separates himself, from a religious body. A fundamental principle of the ideal religious fellowship I have in mind would be freedom of belief; the body should neither decree nor prescribe, nor in any way stand for, any set of theological or philosophical opinions. The query might arise, Would not heresy cease to have any meaning in connection with such a body? It certainly would, in the customary sense of the word. There would be neither necessity nor motive for any one to leave the body, to the end of gaining liberty of thought or utterance. But suppose that another set of motives should arise. Suppose that the theistic members of the body should say: "Our theism has become so precious to us that we cannot hold out any longer the fraternal hand to materialists or agnostics." Suppose that agnostics or materialists should say: "We cannot have patience with theism; it is an antiquated, exploded doctrine, and we must refuse to fraternise with those who cling to it." In any of these cases, the fundamental bond of union of the religious body would be assailed; each and every group which thus withdrew and formed a new body would be, in the literal sense of the word, heretical. Instead of standing for freedom, heresy would thus stand for the spirit of intolerance. The heretic would be one who refused to concede to others the same rights he claimed for himself; who said in effect: "I am determined that all others shall think as I do, and, if they do not, I will have no part or lot with them."

No one has argued more finely against the sectarian, dissenting spirit than Matthew Arnold. "The dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion" was the object of his delicate and yet merciless satire. The various dissenting bodies in England were for the most part "hole-and-corner" Churches, out of relation to the great common religious life of the English nation. His argument was only vitiated by the assumption that the Church of England was representative of that nation's common religious life. He called it "a national association for the promotion of goodness." It is, in truth, not only that, but an association equally well for the promotion of the ideas embodied in the Apostles' and Nicene, not to say the Athanasian, Creeds. But though in judgment he was wrong, his ideal was right. There should be an association in every nation for the promotion of goodness—one that would gather to itself all the elements in the nation ready to work for that high end. And when a genuine and all-inclusive society of this nature does arise, whether in England or elsewhere, then all that Mr. Arnold so eloquently said of the spirit of dissent will hold good. Then the separate Churches that may be set up by the theistic or agnostic or socialistic or individualistic sects will be justly called "hole-and-corner" Churches; but, I must add, not till that day. Almost all the dissenting Churches in England, and almost all the separate denominations in this country, have had an excuse for being; they have arisen because freedom in the mother Churches from which they separated was not allowed. Better disorder and confusion, and an infinite number of "hole-and-corner" Churches, than despotism and iron law. When a better day shall dawn, however, and a religious order with liberty—making, indeed, a principle of liberty—shall arise on the earth, then only could narrowness and bigotry, the very spirit of schism and odious heresy, lead to separation from it.

Fourthly, it would follow that through the entire body, and in all its groups and local branches, more should be made of the common aims and ideals of the body than of anything else. Varying philosophical views or economic aims could only make a kind of atmosphere in each group or branch, but could not take the form of a creed or binding statement. The basis of local fellowship should be the same as the basis of the general fellowship; nothing should be *required* anywhere which was not required everywhere. In other words, the questions of personal and social morality should have the first (I do not say the only) claim on the attention of every branch or local organisation. If from any meeting someone should not go away with clearer light as to duty, or with some fresh impulse towards the ideal life, the holding of that meeting would be well-nigh vain. Right living is in one sense the most natural thing to man; in another, it is at times a most difficult and arduous thing, and seems to require almost superhuman watchfulness and strength. Those most honest with themselves are the aptest to feel that the better part of them is not what they are, but what they aspire to be. As for our actual selves, some of us know we are self-conscious, anxious for notice, tickled with applause, without seriousness, and good only by impulse. Others know they are proud, glorying in mastery and in having others obedient to them. Others still are full of irrational aversions and prejudices, and scarcely try to let the calm, purifying light of reason penetrate their minds. Some are sensual, and others are close and ungenerous. Then in the realm of social morality, how we flounder! We know that selfishness as a principle is disorganising and anarchic, and yet our industrial order is to a great extent founded on it, and we think it is all right! We call it in the abstract a devilish maxim that everyone should look out for himself, and woe betide the hindmost; yet in our business relations we are apt to act upon it, and

there are those who can scarcely imagine business being conducted on any other basis. Ethics, the principles of justice and love, are pooh-poohed when they are sought to be applied in this realm; to advocate them is thought to be sentimentalism, or, at best, philanthropy. The religious world is divided into theological camps, when it ought to be a unit in devising a plan of peace and brotherhood for the industrial life of society. It is not enough to preach the Golden Rule; it is necessary to say what the Golden Rule means. To hold up more elevated ideals of personal and social life, to create and to sustain an enthusiasm for them, to lift life actually to higher levels—this would be the sovereign and the central mission of a true religious body.

But is all this religion, it may be asked? Is it not morality? I answer that, for my own part, it is impossible to distinguish between them. Morality is only true morality when it is given religious consecration, and religion is first a truly sacred thing when it becomes an exalted moral enthusiasm. I am aware that, historically, religion arose independently of morality—as, happily, morality arose independently of religion. But the deepest thing, the root-thing in religion, was not so much any peculiar object to which the religious sentiment went out, as the feeling that the object was sacred. It is reverence and awe that make the heart of religion. Whoever holds to something as sacred has a religion or the elements of one. Duty—the thought of the laws under which we live, of their inviolable nature, of their supreme authority, in obedience to which are safety and life and joy, and in departing from which we stray into darkness and the night—may as truly excite awe as did the phenomena of nature, the powers of earth and sky, which first enchained the attention of our forefathers. The most perfect religion, to my own mind, would be a blending of the religion of morality and the religion of nature into an ideal unity.

But whether such a fellowship as I have sketched the ideal of would be *called* religious or not is a comparatively unimportant matter. It might not call itself religious, conscious of the uncertainty and ambiguity in the current use of that term; and there would be no harm in this. But what it should *be*, whether it was faithful to its ideal or not—on this everything would depend.

XV.

THE CAUSE OF ETHICS

NOT every interest or concern of man means a cause. We may be drawn to many things, and yet not feel impelled to do anything about them. We may love beauty or beautiful things, for example. And when we are looking at some rich, evening sky, and the warm colours, the deepening vistas, the light and radiance seem almost like "an opening gateway into heaven," we do not ask what to do about it; enjoyment is all. So with a love of truth. We may desire simply to understand, to have a clear idea of, this frame of things amid which we live. And when we have done this, when we have penetrated some obscure corner of the world, or found the clue to some mysterious process, or unravelled some hidden law, we do not necessarily ask what we are going to do with the knowledge; the joy of discovery may be enough. There is a satisfaction of the

mind, as of the love of beauty, that is sufficient unto itself.

It is no reflection upon these things to say that a cause rests on a different basis. A cause means that there is something to be done or accomplished in the world. It arises not so much from what we see or discover as from what we do not see and want to see. It is born of the idealising instincts of the mind—not the idealising that dresses things up in fanciful shapes, but that, while seeing things as they are, conceives of what they might be.

By every true cause that wins, the world of reality is made so much fuller, richer, more perfect. Particularly is this true (perhaps here alone is it true) of that part of the world of reality we call human society. Over the world outside man we have little power. The birds of the air, the tribes of animals, the flowers of the field, fulfil their nature and attain their perfection of form unassisted by man. And our power over ourselves and the forms of human society is not absolutely unlimited; yet it is great. Our nature is not altogether set for us, it is in part made by us; and no one can tell beforehand how much may be made —*i.e.*, what are the real possibilities of our nature. Physically, man can perhaps easily be classified; but the real man is spiritual—is made up, I mean, of thoughts, wishes, aspirations, struggles, actions; and it is not easy to draw lines and say what these may or may not be. Since man attains his end by thought, there would seem to be no necessary limits to his attainments save those of thought, and he would appear to have in him the possibility of an infinite progression. Perhaps, after all, man has no fixed nature, in the sense that a bird or a tree has, but can become anything that is good and great—can, give him time enough.

Now this thought of a perfected humanity—we may not be able to say just what perfection is, and yet we know the tendency thitherward—is the goal, the ambition, the mainspring of ethics. Ethics, we familiarly say, means human welfare, the greatest possible welfare, and I see not how we can stop short of the thought of a perfect development of man. In the abstract sense, indeed, ethics covers all our voluntary activity and applies to our dealings with the lower orders of creation as well; but, in the nature of the case, it is intercourse with our fellow-beings that makes up the greater part of human life, and it is here that most of our duty lies. We are to think of what mankind may be and should be, and then work for it. We are to do everything that will help man and nothing that will harm him. It is but another more explicit way of putting this to say that we are to love all men, save in so far as they dehumanise themselves, and even then we are to love them so long as there is hope of reclaiming them; that we are to do justice to all men, giving them their respective dues; that we are to cheat no one, to defraud no one, to speak falsely to no one; that we should strengthen those who are weak and have pity on those who err; that we should remove needless temptations and surround men with all good influences; that we should try by all the forces of love and persuasion to convert those who have fallen into vicious and shameful ways; that we should spread light and knowledge and hope and cheer, so that all may attain something like a worthy human life on the earth. And most of us have special duties owing to our peculiar circumstances and situation in life. We are members of families, we live in communities, we have some special trade, calling, or profession. For husbands and wives to be true to one another and to faithfully educate their children, for citizens to care for the public good as well as their own private interests, for each one to follow faithfully his chosen task in life and do that one thing well—this, too, is human duty.

I have said ethics aims at a perfected humanity. And yet how far away, how vague, in a sense how unpractical, such a thought seems! It is the duties that lie

right before us, that arise in the relationships of life with which we are already familiar, which give an immediate point, a concrete, definite content that no one can mistake, to ethics.

Such is my general understanding of ethics. It includes a great aim and immediate definite duty. Or, to turn it round, it means immediate definite duty and a great aim—it includes not only the few rules we are all familiar with, but an enlarging circle of duty, enlarging as our knowledge advances and as our opportunities increase; and this enlargement has no limit till the goal of perfection, the actual universal humanisation of man is reached.

Ethics is thus in its very nature a cause—for it represents an uncompleted ideal, something that in any perfection is still to be. We may, of course, study the ideal of human life, and the conditions of its attainment, simply to make things clear to ourselves; we may do so without a thought of what is to be done with the knowledge, whether by ourselves or anybody else. To the pure student or investigator, as I have said, the repose, the illumination of the mind, are their own reward. Yet this would be thought about ethics rather than ethical thought—at least, it would be ethical thought without ethical impulse or disposition, for the real ethical, as contrasted with the purely scientific or speculative, spirit is just in this tendency to action; it presupposes knowledge, but the characteristic thing about it is the disposition to turn knowledge to account, to live by it, and to wish to have others come into living possession of it too.

To live according to the light we have and try to spread it, and to be receptive towards all new light; to plant our feet firmly on the ground whereon we stand to-day, and yet to turn our faces forward and be ready to strike out on new paths, in the brave hope of leading mankind further on towards its goal—such would seem to be the true ethical spirit.

But if this is all true, what more natural than that a movement should arise on the basis of it? What more natural than that this cause of causes should organise itself and take on body and form? Some of us are familiar with Emerson's words, in which, after remarking that Stoicism has now no temples, he says: "It accuses us that it has none; that pure ethics is not now formulated and concreted into a *cultus*, a fraternity with assemblings and holy days, with song and book, with brick and stone."

The trouble that I suppose many would feel about such a purely ethical movement would be that ethics is so mixed up with other things—with religion, for instance, with science, with practical reform—that it is hardly possible, or even necessary, to make it a separate thing and cultivate it on its own account. Is not religion, it may be said, an instrumentality for furthering the cause of ethics; and is not science our instructor in ethics; and are not the various reforms the way in which ethics—at least, social ethics—practically works in the world? To belong to a Church, to engage in the scientific study of ethics, and to identify ourselves with some special reform movement or movements—is not this our whole duty, so far as helping the cause of ethics goes? And yet I think one may admit the place and function of all these agencies, and perhaps himself be connected with them, and yet hold that there is a place for a distinctive ethical movement. Let me proceed to show this.

First, as to religion. I should be the last to deny or question that the Churches are an ethical instrumentality. However objectionable their beliefs or creeds may be (or may not be), no one who is not a victim to the anti-religious bias can say that they are not, on the whole, a moral force in the community, and, I should say, the strongest organised moral force. A Church, however, stands of course for two things—for morality and for certain views of God; these two things, at least. Now, there may be certain advantages in this, but there are also disadvantages.

In the first place, it provides only for those who hold these two things in common, or, what is the same, does not provide for those who, while holding to morality, are uncertain about the belief in God. The time was when it might have been (or at least was) said that only the fool could say in his heart there was no God. And perhaps downright atheism was always more or less folly. But *uncertainty* about this greatest of all conceptions cannot be called so. No intelligent man who knows anything of the thinking world to-day can label those who refrain from saying that they believe in God as fools, much less as persons who prefer darkness to light; though pious ignorance in the pulpit does sometimes talk in this way. With the best use of the intelligence they have, and in all honour and conscience, there are those who can only say that they hold to one of the two things the Church stands for. What is to be done with them or for them? A purely ethical movement would seem to be a necessity, when we consider their case.

But, in the second place, there are those in the Church itself who do not like to be cut off from (or to cut off) earnest and conscientious brethren simply for a belief's sake. The spirit of toleration is in the air; sentiments of love and brotherhood are stirring human hearts now as never before. There is a craving for union rather than division, for comprehension rather than exclusion. In orthodoxy there is a steady minimising of the essentials of religious faith. Some say only faith in the Bible should be required; others only faith in Christ, even if one is doubtful about the inspiration of the Bible; still others that only faith in God is necessary, even if one is uncertain who and what Christ was. But the same reasons that urge the Churches to go thus far urge them to go further. For, if the idea is to cease to require assent to ideas that earnest and conscientious men can doubt, or at least differ about, then if theism is such a matter, it should not be required any more than the Trinity or the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and there be but one thing asked for—namely, to love the right and to strive to do it.

Yet, when the Church does go so far as this, it will take its stand alongside of a purely ethical movement.

And if it does not go so far, but continues to require assent to some of the ancient doctrines, it surely cannot object to the formation of an association on the broader and more inclusive lines. Its members, as individuals, might join such an association, retaining loyally their Church connections, and yet in this way striking hands with all persons ready to further the great cause of righteousness in the community. The only persons who would be necessarily kept from such an association would be those who thought that morality had no meaning or basis apart from religion, or else who were so jealous of their religious faith that they did not care to make any effort for human advancement that was not undertaken under its sanction. Alas! that there should be persons so unenlightened or so narrow; yet there may be such. As scientific enlightenment and as charity spread, however, their number will inevitably diminish, and more and more it will be seen that religious fellowship may be one thing, and ethical fellowship another, and that men may be joined in the latter who are divided in the former. Of course, if in the basis of an ethical movement were atheism or agnosticism or any new type of religious belief, this could not be said. But in such a case it would not be a purely ethical association, and would differ from a Church only in form, not in principle.

And besides all this there is a great and positive reason for a movement giving its whole devotion to the cause of ethics. This reason is that that cause itself may make progress as it never has before. Interests prosper in this world by separation and concentration. It is the familiar principle of the division of labour again. What strides science has

made since it has been free to follow its own instincts apart from the leading-strings of religious authority, since it has become an independent pursuit and has its own special votaries! And how in each branch of science is specialisation the order of the day! Why should not the same be true of ethics? why would not the world be richer to have a special, distinctive ethical movement? To make righteousness prevail in the earth, to make goodness supreme in every heart, to keep the springs fresh of unfailing effort for the advancement of man, to work for the good we know and to open and explore wider horizons—why is it not well to have a movement in a community that aims at this and at this alone, that does not concern itself with religious questions, that does not attempt to solve the problem of man's origin and destiny, but only to make him, while he lives, live nobly, purely, and to great ends? If the Churches are a moral force, although they aim at other things as well, why should not another form of organisation that gives its whole devotion to this be a moral force with added power in proportion to its concentration? How *can* a body of men, it might be asked, whose thoughts go so largely to questions relating to God and the hereafter, to the mission of Jesus, to the authority of the Bible, to creeds and the revision of them, to forms of Church government, to details of ritual—how can they give themselves up so to human service or inspire others to do so, as another body whose very aim, whose single mission, should be of this description? And this is said without in the slightest implying that these religious questions have not their places. Moreover, ethics itself needs to be subdivided; there are various departments of it; the home, the school, business and industry, the community or nation, the world — there are appropriate duties under each of these heads; and these duties should be specially studied, and the knowledge, love, and practice of them specially propagated in the community. There should be various societies within the larger association for this end, each with its special interest and its special work; and there might be societies with different ideas and methods in detail, with different sorts of practical programme—just as there are varying schools of religious thought in any broad and comprehensive Church—all harmonising fundamentally and recognising the same great rules of life, and yet interpreting them differently and working in friendly rivalry with one another. How could anything but good come from all this specialisation and diversity of task? What an ethical advance might be made in society if a movement of this description were in existence!

But if there is a place for an ethical association independent of religious organisations, there is also place for such an association independent of societies with purely scientific aims. I use science now broadly, as covering ethical as well as physical science, and I have in mind particularly the purely scientific spirit (whether applied to ethics or elsewhere). The aim of science, as I understand it, is to find the truth, and it has nothing necessarily to do with the propagation of the truth. The man who is eager to spread scientific knowledge, praiseworthy as this is, is not a whit more scientific on this account. Professor Huxley is an excellent instance of a man who was at once a scientific authority and a born preacher; but the two things are distinct, and the fact that he was so earnest to spread his light and was such a master of popular exposition does not in the slightest increase his scientific standing. Now I cheerfully grant that science is our guide in ethics—and the scientific thinkers, the Platos, the Aristotles, the Kants, the Spencers, the Sidgwicks, are our masters in this department. Ethics apart from science (in this sense) is mere impulse, or emotion, or habit; it has not the dignity of thought. And yet science is as incomplete on the one side as mere impulsive ethics is on the other. Science is truth simply, but real ethics is life; and there is needed an instrumentality

to turn truth into life, something, then, guided by science, and yet that is more than science, something rooted in that desire for perfection of which I have spoken, in those elemental moral impulses, which are not light indeed, but are energy and moving force. There is a place, then, for something more than scientific societies, even than scientific societies for the study of ethics; there is a place for societies aiming to teach, to move and inspire. In the nature of the case, these societies will not be afraid of appealing to feeling, to sentiment, for these are the means by which action is stirred and life is moulded; they will not be afraid of music and poetry and all the resources of art; they will not be ashamed of enthusiasm. All those things that would be out of place in a purely scientific association are the very means and methods by which they will do their work. But though something apart from scientific associations, it need not be apart from scientific men, any more than, being distinct from religious associations, it need be without the co-operation of religious men; rather should I say that an ethical movement was in a position of peril if it did not enlist in its work persons of scientific habits and training, for they are the persons to sober, to temper, to keep rational our enthusiasm; and as for being themselves benefited by connection with a genuine ethical movement, they, I believe, would be the first to admit. No less a man of science than Professor Huxley suggested, in discussing the disestablishment of the Church of England, a Church "in which, week by week, services should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology, but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of truly just and pure living; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life, which is possible for all, though attained by so few; a place in which the man of strife and business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets compared with peace and charity"—and he added, depend upon it, if such a Church existed, no one would seek to disestablish it. I need not point out that no one could have written in this way who did not have profound sympathy with the ideal he portrayed. There is plainly nothing in the most severe scientific training that keeps one from appreciating all that can be done for the culture of the moral life.

Equally is there a place for an ethical movement alongside of, and yet distinct from, the reform movements of the day. Speaking in general, I think conscience is on the side of reform. Most of the reforms of our time are ethical in origin, or at least have an ethical impulse among their moving forces. Municipal reform, for instance, reform of the tariff, reform of the system of taxation—these are asked for because men believe that justice and the common welfare would be served by them. The larger schemes of reform of society as a whole have, I believe, more of truth than of error in them. The desire for a more fraternal spirit in society, and in the industrial department of society as truly as in any other, and for competition and rivalry only so far as they are compatible with the fraternal spirit—this is but an expression of the ethical impulse. If we take our stand on ethics, we are bound, as Emerson said of the reforms of his day, to be for reform. All the same, I believe there is a special separate place for an ethical society. For, in the first place, we are to conserve and hand on to posterity the good that already is; and that, in the nature of the case, is another work than that which the reformer undertakes, though no sane and large-minded reformer would deny its necessity. The commonly recognised virtues are none too prevalent in society, and some of them are a continual effort and struggle for many people. The barbaric and bestial are always more or less below the fair surface of civilised society, and sometimes we are surprised to have revealed to us how incomplete and

superficial a thing our civilisation is. There are men ready to commit murder, rape, arson, robbery, in all our large communities, and in many smaller ones as well. There is a great work to do in simply completing and strengthening the present order of society—I mean the order which is organised to protect the lives and persons and property of men from violence. This is homely work; it does not attract the imagination; but it, too, was reform work once on a time, when society was emerging from its early stages of anarchy, and it is work that must be done and must be ever better done, if even what civilisation and culture we have are to be transmitted and the mere possibilities secured of greater advance in the future. Ethics is thus larger than reform, for it includes preserving the foundations of society as well as rearing a nobler superstructure.

Then there is the private and personal life of men which reforms do not attempt to deal with—at least the *social* reforms which I now have particularly in mind. Of course, temperance reform and work for "social purity," so-called, touch parts of personal morality, but even they, so far as they are called reform movements, aim more, as I understand, at changing conditions and laws than habits and character directly. And yet how much men need reinforcement in their private consciences and personal inward efforts, not only as regards temperance and purity, but as regards all the virtues of private and domestic life! How much unhappiness is caused in the world, not by any social wrong, but by the meanness and littleness of men, by ill temper, by lack of consideration, by rough-shod ways, by forgetfulness and most prosaic selfishness! It is much to be feared that, with all reform of society, something will be found to be lacking so long as people do not learn to curb their tongues and control their passions of every kind. Comfort and wealth do not always bring upright character after them; I fear, those who have these things now are not much superior to other people in either morals or manners; and I cannot see how making comfort and wealth general in the community, desirable as this would be, would of itself make much difference in this respect; I cannot see how the justest conditions are of themselves bound to change the characters of men. And all this is equivalent to saying, not that reform work is not necessary, not that everything under heaven that can be done to increase the chances and opportunities of men, of all men, should not be done, but that other work is also necessary—that, as the excellent old Statement of Principles of the Philadelphia Ethical Society put it, efforts for personal reform must go hand in hand with efforts for social reform. This is a field that forever needs to be cultivated, as nothing, absolutely nothing, can take the place of the energising of the private will, the striving of the individual man to be true to his better self.

And there is still another way in which reform movements do not take up the whole field of ethics. Each of them is partial, each consists of a remedy for one abuse or system of abuses. Each means an advance in one direction, and, while this is necessary and perhaps the only way to secure the progress needed, there is needed to satisfy the mind and soul of man a vision of the whole of which these are fragments, a sense of the principle of which these are but varied applications, and such a sense as will give rise to new applications of the principle as time and occasion demand. From the ethical point of view, it must be remembered, we want not tax reform merely, or tariff reform, or municipal reform, but a perfect society, a state of things in which all men have the opportunity to realise the fulness of their natures and in which they are doing so, and hence all reforms that are necessary or are steps to that end. How narrow reformers sometimes are, and how they are apt to slight one another! The conservative waxes merry over this, but lovers of humanity grieve. How rarely reformers take a comprehensive view of society, so

that they see a place and meaning for all needed reforms—others as well as those to which they are specially devoted!

Possibly narrowness of vision is necessary to intensity, but I am loth to believe it; I am well aware that a limited range of *action* is necessary to effective work, but I do not see why with this may not go a large range of thought; why one cannot do his own task just as well, though he is conscious that it is part of a larger task. What the world most needs, I believe, is not large thought alone nor earnest action alone, but large thought combined with earnest action, and I believe that for this union both the thought will be clearer and saner and the action will be more effective. Separation in work, communion in thought—such, I suspect, is the true though, I admit, not easily attainable ideal.

And so, turn it on whatever side we will, there seems to be a distinct place for an ethical association. Other types of organisation have their place, but this has its place, and, if they did their work perfectly, this would no less be necessary. A society is wanted in the community where all good men (so disposed, that is), whatever their religious creeds, may work together, and feel their comradeship with one another. This want no Church supplies (nor can supply, so long as it has articles of religious faith). A place is wanted, too, which shall be a centre for the propaganda of the truths of ethical science, and this place no purely scientific association can fill. And a place is wanted which shall not so much stand for one reform as give an impulse to all reform; which shall hold up the principle of reform, and serve as a bond of union for reformers—a place, too, which shall conserve as well as reform, and shall strive to touch and inspire the individual heart; and this want is not met by any existing reform organisation.

I have, in all this, it is true, sketched an idea rather than a reality; and yet it is in the light of an idea of this sort that I interpret what is commonly called the Ethical Movement. Almost all realities are poor copies of the ideas they are meant to serve, and yet it is, I take it, some such idea as I have tried to set forth that inspires us who are working in this movement. I do not care to glorify the movement, but I am always ready to glorify the cause for which it stands. Our achievements are slight; but that which wins us and holds us to our work is the vast unachieved. When a perfect humanity arrives, our work will be done; when the city of God appears on earth, we can lay down our arms. But till then, the fight, the struggle—and (for the present) the victory far off!

In form, of course, ours is a new movement, and there is a disadvantage in anything new. Yet there is also an advantage—namely, that we are in it freer to follow the inspiration of our own hearts, and to consult not so much precedents and traditions as the living ideal in our own minds. As an organisation, we have no past behind us, and therein some may hold us weak; but time has his earlier and his later births, and both may be beautiful; the new day has a freshness all its own—and there is, indeed, a kind of charm for generous spirits in embarking on an untried and uncertain enterprise. We ask not to be assured of victory; we only ask for a chance to deserve it. We give what we have, and we are ready to give all we have, conscious that it is a great end we strive for—that we are responding to a deep central need of the time and of long ages to come.

"And oh, if nature sinks, as oft she may,
'Neath long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
Still in the soul to admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness,
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard."

